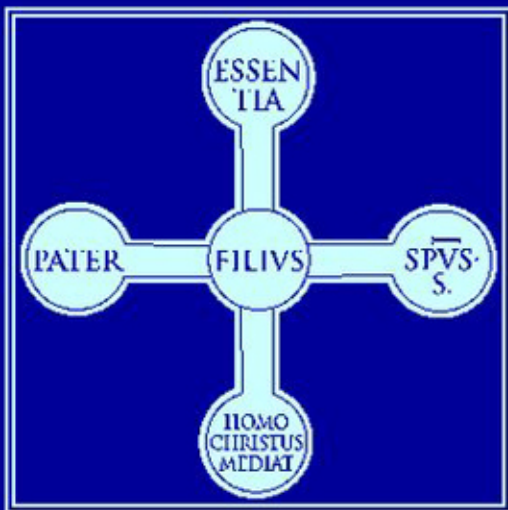


FROM LOGOS TO TRINITY

*The Evolution of Religious Beliefs
from Pythagoras to Tertullian*



MARIAN HILLAR

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This book presents a critical evaluation of the doctrine of the Trinity, tracing its development and investigating the intellectual, philosophical, and theological background that shaped this influential doctrine of Christianity. Despite the centrality of trinitarian thought to Christianity and its importance as one of the fundamental tenets that differentiates Christianity from Judaism and Islam, the doctrine is not fully formulated in the canon of Christian scriptural texts. Instead, it evolved through the conflation of selective pieces of scripture with philosophical and religious ideas of the ancient Hellenistic milieu. Marian Hillar analyzes the development of trinitarian thought during the formative years of Christianity from its roots in ancient Greek philosophical concepts and religious thinking in the Mediterranean region. He identifies several important sources of trinitarian thought heretofore largely ignored by scholars, including the Greek Middle Platonic philosophical writings of Numenius and Egyptian metaphysical writings and monuments representing divinity as a triune entity.

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To my family
Janett, Annie, and Christopher

Though the Holy Scripture is authoritative, its authority can be assessed exclusively by the judgment of our reason. Because of this, the Holy Scripture cannot contradict reason, just as faith should not contradict reason. Indeed, faith follows the judgment of reason and believes that which reason judges worthy of belief.

Joachim Stegmann Sr., *De iudice et norma controversiarum fidei*

I implore you, Who in his sane mind could tolerate such logomachias without bursting into laughter? Not in the Talmud, nor in the Qur'an can one find such horrendous blasphemies. But we are accustomed to hear them to the point that nothing astonishes us. Future generations will judge them obscure. Indeed, they are obscure, much more than the diabolic inventions which Irenaeus attributed to the Valentinians.

Michael Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio, De Trinitate*

If you show me a single passage in which the Son was called the Word, I will admit my defeat.

Michael Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio, De Trinitate*

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Foreword

This book is one of those rare gems that deserves a thorough reading by all who are concerned with the history and practice of the Christian faith, particularly in relation to other great world religions. Marian Hillar has broken new ground in the detail of his work, although his foundational point is one made by significant predecessors in the history of the development of Christianity, such as Adolph Harnack and his student Friedrich Loofs.

This account of the development of doctrine “from Logos to Trinity” is critically important in our time because both scholars and the general public seem largely ignorant of the profound shifts in thinking that occurred when the essentially Jewish faith of New Testament times became severed from its roots and succumbed to the distorting influence of Neoplatonism.

The churches have in general turned a blind eye to the somewhat embarrassing fact that a very strong pagan Greek influence adversely affected the Christian faith as it emerged after apostolic times.

It is a strange paradox that it is only in the twenty-first century that a scholar well versed both in the two biblical Testaments and in the Greek philosophical schools of late antiquity has set his hand to provide us with just the information we need for an intelligent assessment of the pristine Christianity that preceded its remarkable deterioration from the second century. Hillar’s thesis has enormous implications for Jewish-Christian relations as well as for sensible dialogue between both those faiths and Islam.

Marian Hillar is perhaps the first to put his finger on the detail of just how biblical Christianity’s decline into a philosophical form of religion came about. He shows us that the Middle Platonist Numenius quite evidently exhibits an extraordinary affinity with the thinking of the second-century Christian Apologist Justin Martyr. The middle of the second century marks the transition, via a mishandling of John’s logos teaching, from one theological paradigm to a new and very different one. By stages, the unitary monotheism of Jesus and the apostles became the complex construction of the nature of God as Trinity. Now that this scholar has laid bare the evidence, we are all

better able to reevaluate our own positions vis-à-vis Christianity as it originally stemmed from Jesus himself. Hillar adds a point to the reflection of Dr. Colin Brown of Fuller Seminary, who, in his remarkable *Ex Auditu* article, “Trinity and Incarnation” (vol. 7, 1991, p. 90), wonders “whether the thorny questions of later ages might have been avoided if the church fathers had not embarked on the language of the ‘eternal generation of the Son.’ How things might have been different if the fathers had kept strictly to the language of John’s prologue as their paradigm.”

Marian Hillar spells out the process by which that departure from John into the muddy waters of Greek philosophy took place. His work thus provides an important contribution to the contemporary debates over Christology. The necessary detective work has now been done. This is a trail-blazing endeavor. Though *From Logos to Trinity* may not be for the timid who cannot imagine that the status quo on the identity of the biblical Jesus could be askew from a biblical point of view, it challenges all those prepared to take a new look at how the Christian faith in all its forms arrived at its present condition. It may in fact lead to an almost complete rewriting of theological history. Although the author allies himself with none of the faith claims of any of the parties described by him, he follows hard on the heels of a hero of his, Michael Servetus, whose remarkably advanced *Restoration of Christianity* Marian Hillar and Christopher A. Hoffman have been the first to translate from Latin into English. That exercise was an ideal springboard to the present unveiling of the astonishing compromise, noted already by Servetus – a compromise made with Neoplatonism found in the early church fathers and largely hidden from the churchgoing public. Hillar’s thorough investigation is likely to have profound effects on the reader.

Anthony Buzzard, MA (Oxon.) MA Th
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Preface

This book is a result of a lifelong interest in studying the fundamentals of religious doctrines and their justification. Each religion has a set of basic characteristic postulates that religious leaders and thinkers use as premises, acceptable one way or another.

When I learned in my youth that there is only one god and that this god had three distinct persons, and that other people may have a different god or gods, I could not find anyone who was able to dispel my confusion and doubts or enlighten my youthful curiosity. I had the good fortune, however, to be given the wise advice to study the matter in order to satisfy my inquiry. Thus, there is a long list of people, who will remain unnamed, who contributed in various ways to this study, and I owe them a debt of gratitude for their knowledge and encouragement.

I am grateful to several libraries, especially the Fondren Library at Rice University in Houston and the library at the Free University of Amsterdam, without whose resources I could not have done the work. I want especially to express my thanks for the encouragement and support given me by Anthony Buzzard of Atlanta Bible College and Ángel Alcalá of the City University of New York. Professor Buzzard not only encouraged me during the years of writing this manuscript but also reviewed the entire text and gave me valuable advice on several points. I owe my thanks to the reviewers of the manuscript who introduced many constructive changes and to the Publishing Director at Cambridge University Press, Beatrice Rehl, and to her Editorial Assistants, Amanda J. Smith and Emily Spangler, for their interest in getting my manuscript ready for publication. Finally, this book could not appear without the tireless work of Claire S. Stelter (formerly Allen), who corrected and revised my prose during the many months of writing and preparing the manuscript for publication.

Marian Hillar
Center for Philosophy and Socinian Studies

Introduction

The major doctrinal difference between the three main religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – is in the interpretation of the metaphysics of the divinity. Each of these religions has its own long history. Judaism can be traced to Mesopotamian and Egyptian sources, whereas Christianity arose as a mixture of Judaic, Egyptian, and Hellenistic elements; Islam, in turn, is a mixture of Judaic, Christian, and various local Near Eastern elements. Putting aside the issue of the various and diversified supernatural beings that are considered secondary to the primal supreme being, we find a strict unitarian view among the Judaic and Islamic branches of religion. This issue of how various religions view their divinity remains one of the obstacles for their unification and may be a factor deciding their future evolution.

In the sixteenth century, Michael Servetus, encouraged by the initial thrust of the Reformation movement, hoped that by restoring Christianity to its original simplicity, it could be united with Judaism and Islam. Soon, however, his hopes were dashed, for in their theistic dogmatic form religions tend to isolate themselves and oppose each other for speculative minutiae that are irrelevant in everyday life for the moral well-being of societies.¹

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the world according to our Western ideology was considered to be static and not undergoing changes. The same was extended to the realm of ideas and especially to religious views and doctrines. With the development of new evolutionary ideas that were applied not only to the external world where the process was originally discovered but also to ideology, we came to the realization that religious ideas evolve with the rest of human endeavors. It seems that eventually religions

¹ Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005); Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: A. Knopf, 2006); Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Viking Adult, 2006); Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

will turn into a system of a worldview based on scientific information and naturalistic moral premises.²

There are three, it seems, major movements of thought related to Christian religion. The *first movement* involves the issue of the critical study and reevaluation of the written sources of various religions and their tenets. In Christianity, in modern times it was initiated by critical studies of the Bible during the Reformation and continues in the comparative studies of religions. It leads to the rejection of accepted supernaturalistic dogmas and an ancient worldview. It also leads to the formulation of nontheistic types of “religion,” which are exemplified by the religion of the “highest values” or secular humanism, as propounded by the prominent modern philosopher of religion Stanisław Cieniawa. There are many confessions (i.e., the traditional theistic religions) but only one authentic true religion, the intuition of the “highest ethical values.”³ This religion was also discovered by Jesus himself (regardless whether he was a historical figure or only a literary fiction). According to Cieniawa, “The cult of the Highest Truth excludes any divagation concerning heaven, hell, reincarnation, or any form of existence beyond the grave.... This is the essential but regularly ignored sense of religious life.”⁴

Another variety of a “nontheistic” type of religion but with a mystical twist is proposed by the Episcopalian bishop John Spong,⁵ who asserts that Christianity must change in order to survive. He likewise rejects all the supernaturalistic assumptions of the old ages and ancient worldview represented by the traditional Christianity. He argues that modern scientific understanding of the world urges us to reject old metaphors and assumptions of faith that were used to satisfy our fear of death and existential anxiety. He still retains the concept of God but as a kind of process or self-consciousness, which is responsible for our being as persons.

In this group, we can include a movement that attempts the unification of the natural sciences and religious speculations represented by theologically oriented natural scientists or scientifically oriented theologians. Paul Davies, a theoretical physicist and a representative of this group, recognizes, when talking about various design schemes for the universe, that all the physical

² Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reinchenbach, and David Basinger, *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 9.

³ Stanisław Cieniawa, “Let’s Learn Religion from ... Flowers,” *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism* 14 (2006): 73.

⁴ Stanisław Cieniawa, “The Plurality of Confessions and One Religion,” *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism* 11 (2003): 16.

⁵ John Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1999); John Spong, *A New Christianity for a New World: Why Traditional Faith is Dying & How a New Faith Is Being Born* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2002); John Spong, *Eternal Life: A New Vision: Beyond Religion, Beyond Theism, Beyond Heaven and Hell* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010).

systems that we see, from the biological realm right through to the galaxies, are the products of natural physical processes. When asked how he visualizes god, he answers, “First of all I try to avoid using the word ‘god.’ ... I have in mind something like that rational ground in which the laws of physics are rooted ... something beyond space and time, so this is not a god within time, not a god to whom you can pray and have something change, because this god is a timeless being.... If you want to use the laws of physics to explain how the universe came to exist, then these laws have to transcend the universe – they have to exist in some sort of timeless Platonic realm, and that is what I really do believe.”⁶ And he rejects religion based on the Bible, classifying it as a sort of “madness.”

The *second movement* is diversified and tends to accommodate the natural sciences to religious doctrines or, conversely, religious doctrines to natural sciences. As initiators of this type of approach, we may consider Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Alfred North Whitehead, and Charles Hartshorne.⁷ This trend arose with the realization of the epistemological superiority of the scientific method and reason over revelation, but it still preserves the supernatural reality. This movement is based primarily on philosophical speculations, the so-called process theology or process thought.

In this model of theology, god, though he is still an absolute, immutable, independent, and infinite being, is placed in a temporal process, creative and dependent upon the free decisions of his creatures. His perfection is understood now in terms of his social relatedness, where he responds to all creatures in every event (his love). God grows with the evolving world, but he does not know the contingent events.

In the *third movement*, the key theoretical issue is the reevaluation of the traditional trinitarian dogma. Even Erasmus had feared its incendiary character. In his 1972 exhaustive study, Edmund J. Fortman, a Catholic theologian, characterized it as a “museum piece with little or no relevance to the crucial problems of contemporary life and thought.”⁸ This type of reformulation of Christianity and its appeal to return to the original Messianism initiated in the sixteenth century by Michael Servetus developed into a comprehensive intellectual and religious movement known as Socinianism, which survived

⁶ Paul Davies, “Traveling through Time: A Conversation with Paul Davies,” *Research News & Opportunities in Science and Theology* 2, nos. 11–12 (July–August 2002): 8–11.

⁷ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Phénomène humain* (Paris: Point, 2007; first published in 1955); Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Free Press, 1985; first published in 1929); Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000); Joseph A. Bracken, ed., *World without End: Christian Eschatology from a Process Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005).

⁸ Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Publishers, 1972).

in turn in the form of modern Unitarian Universalism and in its remnants of biblical Unitarian churches.

After undergoing a significant change in the first century from a theocratic monolithic system into a more democratic rabbinical system after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., Judaism isolated itself from the rest of the societies in which Jews lived. It underwent modernization to some degree in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, as a result, split into several denominations. Its more progressive factions acquired for the most part modern political and social ideas from the surrounding cultures.⁹

Islam, on the other hand, though also split into various factions, remains largely attached to its old authoritarian traditions, although there are some isolated and weak voices urging its reinterpretation and modernization.¹⁰ This process is extremely slow and painful because of the lack of a reformation, which was experienced by Christianity, and the prevailing, firmly indoctrinated views among Islamic leaders. As the Islamic scholar Erkan Kurt explains,

There have been some attempts to reform Islam to “accommodate” its doctrines and practices to the demands of modernity. Among them, some attempts aimed to create a “universal” religion by benefiting from Islam as well as other religious traditions. Baha’i Faith is one of them. However, since the Qur’an is grammatically structured as a word of God and proclaims a “complete” message through the mission of Prophet Muhammad, it is theoretically not possible to fuse Islam into an eclectic entity. Such an attempt goes through either the claim of a new revelation from God or what is called “natural religion,” that is, speculative philosophy. Nonetheless, both inevitably oppose the very foundation of Islam.¹¹

Thus, the subject of my study is to examine how the main doctrine of Christianity evolved and specifically to explore its philosophical foundations. I am less concerned here with the analysis of the Christian scriptural texts. Although they are referred to during my investigation, my interest is focused on their textual sources and how the reading of Christian scripture evolved over time in the clash of cultures. The textual analysis of New Testament writings is now firmly established after hundreds of years of studies. They were initiated in seriousness and brought to completion by Michael Servetus in the sixteenth century in his magisterial work, *The Restoration of Christianity. The whole Apostolic Church is summoned to return to its origin to restore the complete knowledge of God*.¹² His studies, though complete, were periodically retraced

⁹ Edgar N. Bronfman and Beth Zasloff, *Hope Not Fear: A Path to Jewish Renaissance* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Abdennour Bidar, *L’Islam sans soumission. Pour un existentialisme musulman* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008).

¹¹ Erkan Kurt, personal communication, January 1, 2011.

¹² Michael Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio* (Vienne, 1553); reprint, Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva G.m.b.H., 1966), English translation: *The Restoration of Christianity: An English Translation of Christianismi restitutio (1553) by Michael Servetus (1511–1553)*, translated by Christopher

and repeated by many scholars. The title of one recent work in a line of many invokes in its title the same appeal to restoration of the original “knowledge of God”: *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian: A Call to Return to the Creed of Jesus*.¹³

A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007); Michael Servetus, *Treatise on Faith and Justice of Christ's Kingdom by Michael Servetus*, selected and translated from *Christianismi restitutio* by Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Michael Servetus, *Treatise Concerning the Supernatural Regeneration and the Kingdom of the Antichrist by Michael Servetus*, selected and translated from *Christianismi restitutio* by Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Michael Servetus, *Thirty Letters to Calvin, Preacher to the Genevans & Sixty Signs of the Kingdom of the Antichrist and His Revelation Which Is Now at Hand (From the Restoration of Christianity, 1553)* by Michael Servetus, translated by Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010).

¹³ Anthony Buzzard, *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian: A Call to Return to the Creed of Jesus* (Morrow, GA: Restoration Fellowship, 2007).

I

The Logos in Greek Culture

The term *logos* (λόγος) was widely used in the Greco-Roman culture and in Judaism. Among its many meanings are word, speech, statement, discourse, refutation, ratio, proportion, account, explanation, reason, and thought.¹ This term, however, is not used for a “word” as used in grammar; instead, *lexis* (λέξις), is used. Both terms derive from the Greek word *legō* (λέγω), meaning to tell, to say, to speak, or to count. But the meanings for *logos* that have philosophical and religious implications are basically two: as an inward *thought* or *reason*, an intuitive *conception*; and as an outward *expression of thought* in speech. In any theistic system, it could therefore easily be used to account for a revelation or could be personified to designate a separate being. Throughout most schools of Greek philosophy, this term was used to designate a rational, intelligent, and thus vivifying principle of the universe. This principle was deduced from an analogy to the living creature, and because the ancient Greeks understood the universe as a living reality in accordance with their belief, it had to be vivified by some principle, namely, the universal *logos*.

THE PRE-SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHERS

Pythagoras

Beginning with the father of Greek philosophy, Pythagoras of Samos (b. ca. 570 B.C.E.), we find already in place all the elements of future Greek schools, of the Philonic synthesis of Hellenic philosophy with Hebrew myth and of the so-called Christian philosophy. About 540 B.C.E. Pythagoras settled in Croton

¹ *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, revised and augmented throughout by Sir Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

in southern Italy, where he founded a religious sect with a strict, austere moral code. The members of his school were taught to devote themselves to the cultivation of philosophy, mathematics (arithmetic and geometry), music, astronomy, and gymnastics. Their study was centered on the Muses, who were the goddesses of harmony and culture, and their guide was Apollo, whose name was interpreted later by the Pythagoreans such as Plutarch of Chaeronea (45–125 C.E.) as equal to the One (in Greek *a* = not, *pollon* = of many).² For Plutarch, who was himself a priest of Apollo in the temple at Delphi, Apollo was a representation of the cosmic principle of harmonic order or logos and the dialectics.³

Though many before Pythagoras called themselves sages or *sophoi*, Pythagoras is the first who called himself a *philosophos*,⁴ a “lover of wisdom.” For him philosophy was not only an intellectual endeavor but also a way of life whose aim was to reach assimilation to divinity, understood as a governing and originating cosmic principle. For Pythagoreans, liberation of the soul is achieved by contemplation of the first principles. Thus, philosophy is a form of purification, a way to immortality, for they accepted the Orphic belief in transmigration. Man was composed of all the principles constituting the cosmos and as such has reason and access to divine power. By contemplation he becomes aware of the divine, that is, of the universal principles that constitute the cosmos. We find in the Pythagorean philosophy the trinity of the cosmological principles, Monad, Dyad, and Harmony, which corresponds on the moral and intellectual level to the trinity of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. The principle of Harmony, immanent in the universe, was responsible for the proportional (*analogia*) relation (*logos*) of one thing to the other.

In Pythagoras’s understanding of reality, the cosmic intelligible principle from which everything evolved by emanation was the Monad ($\mu\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$) represented by the number One. Number One was seen as a principal underlying number; thus, numbers in general were seen as manifestations of the diversity in unity. Monad was the undifferentiated principle of unity of the whole of reality and the source of the world as an ordered universe. It was the principle of all things, and as the most dominant of all that is, all things emanated from it, and it emanated from nothing. It was indivisible and immutable. Everything that exists and even that which is not created yet exists in it. It is the nature of

² Plutarch, *Moralia*, Przełożyła oraz wstępem i przypisami opatrzyła Zofia Abramowiczówna, translation and introduction by Zofia Abramowiczówna, vols. 1 and 2 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1977, 1988), vol. 2, 388F, 393B.

³ *Ibid.*, 387C.

⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers (Vitae Philosophorum)*, with introduction and translation by R. D. Hicks, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), vol. 1, prologue I.12, p. 13.

ideas, God himself, the soul, the beautiful, and the good. It is every intelligible essence itself, such as beauty, justice, and equality.

The next principle was the Dyad (δυάς), which represented diversity in the universe, the opposing powers, the duality of subject and object, and the beginning of the third principle, Harmony (αρμονία). This third principle was the relation (the ratio, *logos*, in proportion, *analogia*) of one thing to another, and it was particularly represented by the proportion between numbers, geometrical figures, or tones in the musical scale. This Triad was immanent in Nature and represented the dynamic process of cosmogony: the One was the unification of the whole reality, the Two represented diversification and differentiation of the One in the process of forming the world order or ordered world (κόσμος, *kosmos*), and Harmony or Logos, by extension, was the bond uniting these two extremes.⁵

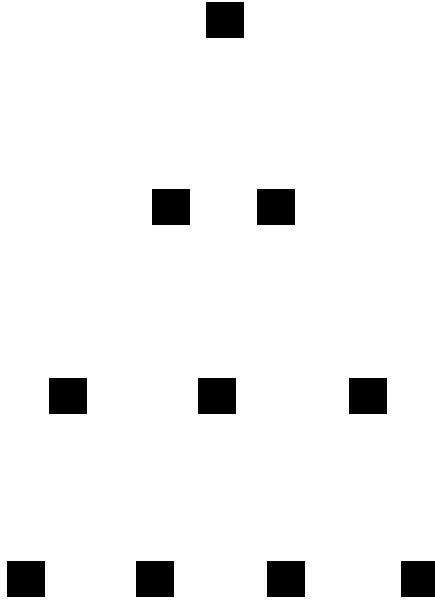
For Pythagoras, the intelligible number is the principle of order in the cosmos and life and is immanent. Thus, his philosophy is a metaphysics of immanent order in contrast to Plato's metaphysics of the transcendent. For Plato divinity is transcendent, and the number is not divinity but the transcendent Form. It follows that truth may be apprehended only through the intellect. In contrast, for Pythagoras the divine principle of Harmony can be grasped through the mind, and it also can be perceived through senses, producing intellectual apprehension.

In the cosmology of the phenomenal material world, Aristotle preserved in his *Metaphysics* the Pythagorean idea of order connected with Limit (Form), or a definite Boundary (πέρας) represented by the Monad, and the idea of diversity or multiplicity linked with the Unlimited or Indefinite (Matter) (ἄπειρον) represented by the Dyad.⁶ Moreover, the Pythagoreans differentiated ten principles of contrarities in the world. The cosmic numerical Pythagorean principles were represented by geometrical figures and were the powers that ordered the world.

The Pythagorean scheme of reality originated from an analysis of the musical scale, and by using the discovered mathematical principles of proportion and harmony, Pythagoras was able to explain the movements of the celestial bodies and to describe the universe and its dynamics. Another example of this approach was the principle of Tetraktys (Τετρακτύς), which represented the numerical pattern of the entire Pythagorean system, as displayed in the following diagram.

⁵ Porphyry, *The Life of Pythagoras in The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library: An Anthology of Ancient Writings Which Relate to Pythagoras and Pythagorean Philosophy*, translated by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, introduced and edited by David R. Fideler with a foreword by Joscelyn Goodwin (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1987, 1988), p. 133.

⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.5.985b.23–986b, in Aristotle, *The Basic Works*, edited and with an introduction by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).



This pattern represented numbers in a geometrical fashion, for example, one was represented by a point, two by a line, three by a triangle, and four by a tetrahedron (the diagram viewed in a three dimensional projection). The whole pattern represented differentiated Unity returning back to Unity (number Ten) and was projected on the cosmic reality described previously in terms of the metaphysical principles of the Limited and the Unlimited.⁷ The paradigm of this Pythagorean cosmology in which unorganized, primordial matter represented by the Unlimited or Indefinite receives shape, qualities, and differentiation by Limit or Form in order to produce the phenomenal, sensible universe was adopted by Plato with only a small modification.⁸

Following the Pythagoras example, one of his disciples, Alcmaeon of Croton,⁹ applied this worldview to the study of medicine, that is, the

⁷ Anonymous preserved by Photius, in *The Pythagorean Sourcebook*, p.137.

⁸ Plato, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1956–1960), Tomes 1–13, texte établi et traduit par Albert Rivaud, Tome 10, *Timée – Critias*, pp. 49–55; English edition: Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, translated with an introduction and appendix on Atlantis by Desmond Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971).

⁹ *Doxographi graeci*, collegit recensuit prolegomenis indicibusque instruxit Hermannus Diels, editio quarta (Berolini: apud Walter de Gruyter et Socios, 1965). See Aëtius V.30.1, Italian translation of the texts: *I Doxografi greci a cura di e tradotti da Luigi Torraca* (Padova: Casa Editrice Dott. Antonio Milano, 1961).

phenomena underlying the condition of health and disease, and developed a concept that health is “the harmonious mixture of qualities,” which became for centuries, until modern times, the foundation of the Hippocratic school of medicine. We find in these Pythagorean concepts also the first representation of a metaphysical trinity as the cosmic unity in the whole reality of the *three principles*, Monad, Dyad, and Harmony. This cosmic metaphysical trinity corresponds on the moral and intellectual level to the trinity of Truth (grasped through the intellect, but also through the senses), Goodness (moral principle achieved by harmony between the psychic and somatic faculties), and Beauty (art or order at the psychological and social level).

Heraclitus of Ephesus and Anaxagoras

Next, the term Logos seems to be employed in its special philosophical metaphysical meaning by Heraclitus of Ephesus (540–480 B.C.E.),¹⁰ who claimed that all things in the world happen according to the Logos.¹¹ He meant by this statement that the world and phenomena are a collection of unified things and an orderly structure (*kosmos*) regulated and arranged by the Logos.

But the whole concept of reason in natural phenomena can be found in most pre-Socratic philosophers with the exception of the atomists, who claimed that all phenomena that occur in nature are a result of inherent properties and interactions between the structures constituting nature.¹² Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (500–428 B.C.E.) is considered to be the first philosopher who assumed Mind (Νοῦς) to be another term closely related to the Logos, thus a rational principle, as the first cause of all things.¹³ He believed that every substance or “stuff” was eternal and nonparticulate. In the beginning everything was a gaseous chaos, and the cosmos originated through separation produced by the cosmic force, Mind. When Mind began to move, all things were separating

¹⁰ Jonathan Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 100–126; Heraclitus, *Fragments*, texts and translation with commentary by T. M. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); Heraclitus, *The Cosmic Fragments*, edited with an introduction and commentary by G. S. Kirk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954); Héraclite d'Éphèse, *Les "Fragments"* (Paris: Éditions CompAct, 1995); G. T. W. Patrick, *The Fragments of Heraclitus of Ephesus "On Nature"* (Baltimore: N. Murray, 1889); Maurice Solovine, *Héraclite d'Éphèse. Doctrines philosophiques produites intégralement et précédées d'une introduction* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1931); Heraklit, *Worte Tönen durch Jahrtausende*, Griechisch und Deutsch (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1959); Hermann von Diels, *Heraklitus von Ephesos*, Griechisch und Deutsch (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1901).

¹¹ Ed. Kirk, frags. 1, 2.

¹² Most texts of pre-Socratic philosophers are compiled in *Doxographi graeci*; Italian translation of the texts in *I Doxografi greci*. Good analysis of pre-Socratic philosophy can be found in W. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962, 1987).

¹³ Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, pp. 226–239.

off from everything and dissociated. They were still further separated by their revolution. This force was different from the rest of things and did not mix with them, for Mind is something infinite and self-controlling, and it is alone itself by itself. But we do not know how Anaxagoras interpreted this Mind: whether it was a personal rational agent, comparable to the later post-Nicaean Christian concept of God, or an impersonal natural force. It seems probable that Anaxagoras meant an impersonal force comparable to the natural forces of “Love” and “Strife” postulated by Empedocles (ca. 495–ca. 420 B.C.E.).¹⁴

The task of human wisdom, according to Heraclitus, consists in grasping this rational principle. Whatever we do or think depends on our participation in the divine Logos.¹⁵ This Logos has to be thought of as a principle with God as it was reported about Heraclitus’s thought that

fire, by the Logos and God which arrange all things, is turned by way of air into moisture, the moisture which acts as seed of the world-forming process and which he calls “sea”; then out of this, earth comes into being and heaven and everything enclosed by it.¹⁶

The world order is just a modification of the eternal world and, in Heraclitus’s view, undergoes a cyclic process of creation and transformation back into cosmic fire.¹⁷ This cosmic fire as the purified form of fire is thought to fill the sky and is the “stuff” from which the celestial bodies are made. It was thought by Heraclitus to be the “most incorporeal” of substances and thus the most likely to be the motive force in the natural change.¹⁸ This cosmic fire was later identified with the ether (αἰθήρ) of the Platonic school and the fifth element of Aristotle.¹⁹ The “visible Gods,” the highest class of divine beings, have bodies of fire. It is also the substance of demons. In earlier writings, ether was identified with air and with fire, as, for example, by Anaxagoras.²⁰ Thus this cosmic fire is the “first principle” or constituent of all things, an *archē* (ἀρχή). At the same time, this fire, as the most noncorporeal of all the elements, at some point is identified by Heraclitus and others with the intelligent and creative agent, the cause of managing and organizing the universe, and thus with God himself, that is, Zeus.²¹ And, as such, it itself remains stable and unchanged. The

¹⁴ Clara Elizabeth Millerd, *On the Interpretation of Empedocles* (New York: Garland, 1980; first published in 1908), pp. 42–55. Helle Lambridis, ed., *Empedocles: A Philosophical Investigation*, preface by Marshall McLuhan (University: University of Alabama Press, 1976); Empedocles, *The Poem of Empedocles: A Text and Translation with an Introduction*, ed. Brad Inwood (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); M. R. Wright, ed., *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New York: Hackett, 1995).

¹⁵ Ed. Kirk, frags. 1, 2.

¹⁶ Ed. Kirk, frag. 31.

¹⁷ Ed. Kirk, frag. 90.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *De anima* I.2.405a27; ed. Kirk, frags. 31a, 32b.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *De Coelo* I.3.270b21–24; Plato, *Timaeus* 58d; *Epinomis* 981c.

²⁰ Aristotle, *De Coelo* I.3.270b25; Guthrie, *History*, pp. 270–273.

²¹ Ed. Kirk, frag. 32.

power of Zeus, God of the bright ether, would emanate violently from it as a thunderbolt and lightning flash. God, as we have seen, is also wisdom.

This divine principle alternately creates the world from itself and again itself from the world thus – “all things are an exchange for fire and fire for all things.” Heraclitus also believed in the resurrection of the visible flesh in which we are born, aware that God is the cause of this resurrection and that the judgment of the world, and all who are in it will come through the eternal fire.²²

Empedocles, Xenophanes, and Parmenides

The most interesting cosmological synthesis among the pre-Socratic philosophers was undoubtedly that created by Empedocles of Akragas (a town in Sicily later renamed by the Romans as Agrigentum). A prominent physician, politician, and poet, he was widely known and recognized, and even a statue was erected to honor him in his native city, which was reportedly transferred later to Rome and placed before the senate building. His cosmic model represents the world in a constant evolutionary and cyclic process not unlike the modern cosmological theory of the Big Bang and the Big Crunch. He was misunderstood in antiquity, and because he used poetic language and the names of Greek mythological gods to designate his cosmic elements and forces, Aristotle called him Homeric.²³ Also, Aristotle erroneously ascribes to him the addition of a fourth element, earth, to water, air, and fire.²⁴

It is generally accepted that Xenophanes of Colophon (ca. 570–ca. 478 B.C.E.) was the first on Greek soil to formulate the theory of the four elements. However, Diogenes Laertius (historiographer of philosophers in the third century C.E.) claims that it was Manethos and Hecataeus who brought this concept from the Egyptians.²⁵ Originally, these four elements were merged into an unorganized primordial stuff, “matter,” and later they were separated.

At the time of Empedocles, there were two current concepts of the universe. One doctrine propounded by Parmenides of Elea (b. 515 B.C.E.) and his school represented a strict philosophical monism and claimed that the universe was one, indivisible, eternal, immutable, and static. It denied the existence of void and time. For them Reality, the One, or Being was in an ever-existing presence. Any change or movement was only a deception of the senses.²⁶ The other

²² Ed. Kirk, frags. 63, 64, 65.

²³ Aristotle, *De Poetis* frag. 70, in *The Works of Aristotle*, translated by David Ross, vol. XII, *Select Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952); Diogenes Laertius VIII.2.57–58.

²⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.3984a.

²⁵ Diogenes Laertius IX.19; VIII.10.

²⁶ Plato, *Parmenides*; some essays on Parmenides' poem in Luigi Ruggiu, *Parménide* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 1971); Francis Riaux, *Essay sur Parménide d'Élée suivi du texte et de la traduction des fragments* (Paris: Librairie de Joubert, 1840); Maja E. Pellikaan-Engel, *Hesiod and Parmenides: A New View on Their Cosmologies and Parmenides's Poem* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert Publisher, 1974); Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*:

was the idea developed by Heraclitus of a universe undergoing continuous metamorphosis from cosmic fire back to cosmic fire, which was at the same time the stuff of the universe from which everything emanated. This was the opposite of the Parmenides immutability, and in the Heraclitus universe there was no real identity of things. Heraclitus is reported to have said: “You cannot bathe twice in the same river; both it and yourself will be different, on the two occasions.”²⁷ Moreover, all becoming or generation was a result of a clash between opposites: “War is the father of all things.”²⁸ Above all these opposites, however, presides the Logos, the universal Reason introducing harmony and unity among the opposites.

Empedocles first combined these two cosmological concepts in his work *On Nature*. Later, at an advanced age, Empedocles joined the Pythagorean mystical-religious sect, probably under the influence of Pythagoras’s son Telauges and disciple Philolaos, and he modified his views in his work entitled *Purifications* by adopting the ideas of immortality of the individual soul, of sin, and of the transmigration of the soul as the way to expiate sins. His admiration for Pythagoras was absolute:

There was one man among them, who knew more than any one and possessed the largest wealth of intellectual power.²⁹

The synthesis offered by Empedocles was, however, original, unique, and coherent and is confirmed in principle by modern science. For Empedocles and Greek thought, the universe was eternal, and nothing could be created out of nothing. Total annihilation is equally unthinkable.³⁰

For Parmenides, the universe was eternal, immovable, and unchangeable but not limitless. If it were limitless, then it could come into being from and disappear into the Infinite.³¹ For Empedocles, the universe was immense and not limitless either, but it was in constant flux. Therefore, Empedocles denied birth and death.³² The stuff of the universe was finite because nothing can be born out of nothing, and nothing really perishes, though mortals

A Study of Word, Image, and Argument in the Fragments (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Pierre Aubeuque, ed., *Études sur Parménide*, Tomes I, II (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1987); L. Couloubaritsis, *Mythe et Philosophie chez Parménide*, en appendice traduction du poème (Bruxelles: Ousia, 1986, 1990); Scott Austin, *Parmenides: Being, Bounds, and Logic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

²⁷ Lambridis, *Empedocles*, p. 33; ed. Kirk, frag. 53.

²⁸ Lambridis, *Empedocles*, p. 33; ed. Kirk, frag. 53.

²⁹ Lambridis, *Empedocles*, p. 38; Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Griechisch und Deutsch (hereafter DK) (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1961), 31B frag. 12.

³⁰ Lambridis, *Empedocles*, p. 2; DK 31B frag. 12.

³¹ Parmenides in DK 28B frag. 6.

³² Empedocles in ed. Kirk, 17; Simon Trepanier, “The Structure of Empedocles’s Fragment 17,” *Essays in Philosophy, A Biannual Journal* 1, no. 1 (2000): 1–17; DK 31B frag. 17; I.34–35.

call the dissolution of things and creatures death. The only things that are immortal and indestructible are the four elements, which he calls “roots” (ῥιζώματα, *rhizōmata*). The term commonly used later for the elements, “stoicheia” (στοιχεῖα, *stoicheia*), was probably introduced by Aristotle. But he speaks in three ways of the elements: in a metaphysical sense as the elements proper of the universe, in the usual sense of everyday experience of visible elements, and in a mythological and symbolic way not unlike that of Philo of Alexandria’s interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. The continuous process of coming into being of things and living creatures exists in the universe by mixing of the four primordial elements in a proper proportion, which is then followed by their dissipation. The elements return to their homogeneous pool, or they produce new combinations, thus new beings or mortal creatures.³³ Thoughtless people, according to Empedocles, call the disappearance of objects death and their coming into being birth. But this universe is perpetually the same because the same conditions return periodically through a cyclic process of generation and dissipation in the four stages.

The supreme stage in the cyclic evolution of the universe is the occurrence of the Sphairos (Σφαῖρος) or Sphere, which is periodically destroyed and reformed. This Sphairos is the final stage in one cosmic cycle and the initial stage in the following one. Empedocles conceived the metaphor of the Sphairos based on the concepts of Xenophanes and Parmenides. For Xenophanes, if we believe the testimonies of later doxographers, was to use the metaphor of the sphere in order to describe the perfection of the divinity without all the usual trappings of the anthropomorphic features, a divinity totally transcendent and detached from the human world. Thus this Sphairos would represent the form of the divine, a sphere neither finite nor infinite, all mind, having nothing in common with humans and existing outside the universe but simultaneous with it.³⁴ For Parmenides, the universe as a whole was immutable, unchangeable, and spherical. As a Being, it was perfect and resembling (ἐναλίγκιον, *enalinkion*) in any way the bulk of a well-rounded sphere, equally balanced in all ways from the center.³⁵ For Empedocles, the Sphairos becomes a special stage in the cosmic cycle when all objects, everything that exists – celestial bodies, men, beasts, gods, elements – are dissolved in an amalgam, a state of perfection. It is round, enormous, and not limitless and can be described only negatively.³⁶

³³ DK 31B frags. 15, 17, 21.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.V. 986 b; Hippolytus, *Philosophoumena* in *Doxographi graeci*, I.14.2; Theophrastus, *Physic. Opinion*, in *Doxographi graeci*, 5; Xenophanes of Colophon, *Fragments*, text and translation with commentary by J. H. Lesher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

³⁵ DK 24B frag. 8; translation by J. H. Lesher in Xenophanes of Colophon, *Fragments*, p. 102.

³⁶ DK 31B frag. 27, in Lambridis, *Empedocles*, p. 53.

The metaphor of the Sphairos was chosen because it easily represented something perfect. It is not unlike a representation of the giant Black Hole, a cosmic stage before the Big Bang and a result of the Big Crunch of modern astrophysics. The mind of mortal humans is not able to grasp this awesome universe, one only Empedocles is able to understand.³⁷

The idea of the forces that operate in the universe, Strife or Hatred (νεῖκος) and Amity or Love (φιλία) (also designated allegorically as Aphrodite, Harmony, Kypris), was developed by Empedocles under the influence of Heraclitus and his dialectic of contradictions operating simultaneously under one law of the universe, the Logos that permeates all nature. Though the law is universal, each human has his own mind.³⁸ These forces are not personal causes directing the world but are subject to the law of the cosmic cycle.

In the phase of Sphairos, the dominant force is Amity, and Strife is pushed to the periphery, but it slowly finds its way into the center of the Sphairos and now creates havoc, a vortex-like movement dispersing the elements. From this action, a process of physical evolution of the world takes place producing all the phenomena and the unusual disasters, together with the biological evolution creating strange creatures taken from ancient mythology (the second stage in the cosmic cycle). At the same time, Amity operates too, slowly pushing Strife to the edges of the world and creating order in the inanimate and animate realms of the world, producing normal creatures and the usual phenomena. This is the third stage in the cosmic cycle, an ideal era when all creatures are tamed and friendly to each other and man. At a certain phase, mortal humans emerge as well as the “long-lived” but mortal gods. No gods of war exist then, only Kypris (Κύπρις) or Aphrodite. This idealistic picture was supplemented in the second work of Empedocles by the description of the cult of Kypris in bloodless sacrifices. Greek scholar H. Lambridis interprets the picture in historical terms as an echo of a surviving memory of the peaceful and happy pre-Greek civilization.³⁹ Personal immortality is not possible; according to Empedocles, there is no survival after death or existence before death except in the form of elements.⁴⁰

Men rejoice at seeing birth and grieve at seeing death, but these are nothing more than a coming together or separation of the elements.⁴¹

In the process, the elements were supposed to be running through each other in some way and in time become different, but they are forever the same.⁴² This created a controversy with the Hippocratic school since Galen (second century C.E.) objected to the mutual penetration of the elements, as they

³⁷ DK 31B frag. 2, in *ibid.*, p. 54.

³⁸ Ed. Kirk, frags. 1, 2.

³⁹ Lambridis, *Empedocles*, pp. 60–62.

⁴⁰ DK 31B frag. 15, in *ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴¹ DK 31B frag. 9, in *ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

⁴² DK 31B frags. 17, 21, 26.

could only be mixed by juxtaposition.⁴³ Nevertheless, Aëtius (philosophical historiographer, fifth century C.E.) thought that Empedocles and Xenophanes considered elements as composed of still smaller “elements of elements” of the same quality and undifferentiated between themselves.⁴⁴ Amity generally has a tendency to unite elements and bring some order, beauty, and design. Strife, on the other hand, primarily works dispersing the objects and elements, but it also creates things of unusual shapes and without order. It creates animate monstrous creatures that cannot survive and which are slowly eliminated (dissipated) by Amity.

The world’s equilibrium when Amity’s action predominates is disturbed next by slowly gaining Strife. And now it seems that Empedocles shifts his point of emphasis to the aspects of moral human actions and describes the current state of affairs in our imperfect world with all its destruction of animal species, hatred among men and gods, and wars. Gods now demand bloody sacrifices, which to Empedocles, who became a Pythagorean, were equivalent to the slaughter of human beings. Empedocles, like Heraclitus and Pythagoras, expresses his passionate appeals to his compatriots to stop these nonsensical animal sacrifices:

They atone for blood shedding
by smearing themselves with blood,
as if to cleanse oneself from mud,
you had to wallow in mud.⁴⁵

This current historical period will last some time before the destruction by Strife will take place (the fourth stage in cosmic history). Then the world will be dissipated into its elements and again, because of the action of Amity, turned into a perfect amalgam of Sphairos.

Thus, world history operates in a cyclic fashion from one Sphairos stage to the next Sphairos stage and covers an enormous stretch of time. Though Empedocles does not specify how long such a cycle lasts, we may get some insight from Lambridis, who compares it with the Babylonian concept of the “long year,” two minutes of which are equivalent to 720 earthly years. Just 1 Babylonian year would be 262,800 of our years. But it is governed by the fourth principle, which is above the Forces and the Elements – Fate or Necessity as the supreme governing Law (Logos). This law was not God because the gods in the Empedocles scheme were generated in the cyclic evolution and, like everything else, they were subjected to the Forces with the difference that they lived longer and were honored by men.

⁴³ *Corpus Medicorum* 19.7; Galen, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, edition, translation, and commentary by Philip de Lacy, First Part: Books I–V, Second Part: Books VI–IX (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981, 1984).

⁴⁴ Aëtius in *Doxographi graeci* I.13.1.

⁴⁵ DK 22B frag. 6, in Lambridis, *Empedocles*, p. 63.

In the later part of Empedocles' life, after joining the Pythagorean sect, his outlook on the world underwent a significant change. His Sphairos became now a transcendent being outside the sensible world, just as Xenophanes and Empedocles ascribed to the Sphairos consciousness and thought.⁴⁶

Empedocles probably got interested in the Pythagorean theories because of his attraction to the idea of the transmigration of souls and survival of consciousness. He was probably affected by many trends current at that time, including influences from the East in the form of a new Buddhist religion.⁴⁷ Pythagoras himself claimed to pass through four transmigrations. Empedocles still did not believe in the transcendentality of the gods, as they were historical figures who became immortal.

In *On Nature*, Empedocles believed that the highest human attainment was to be merged in the Sphairos as its integral part without any personal memory. Now, in *Purifications*, when the Sphairos became a transcendent being, the highest attainment for man became deification but after transmigration in order to expiate sins:

In the end they become seers and composers of hymns and physicians,
and leaders of men on earth. From these (states) they sprout
up again as gods immortal, honored above all.⁴⁸

Empedocles now wants personal immortality for man and recognizes it in the survival of consciousness after dissolution of the elements of the body. It is not clear, however, whether this means survival only through one cosmic cycle or through many.⁴⁹

Another change was his deep preoccupation with sin. It came probably from the Orphic occult sects, which were quite popular at that time in Greece. The idea of sin was not prominent in Greek philosophy. It was well developed in the Hindu and Egyptian cultures and in mystic religions such as Orphism. His main concern was the crime committed by killing sacrificial animals and thereby the people who were incarnated in them. Empedocles considered himself among the sinners.⁵⁰

Diogenes of Apollonia and Anaximenes

Another concept of pervading intellect was developed by Diogenes of Apollonia (fl. ca. 430 B.C.E.), who is considered the last of the pre-Socratic natural philosophers.⁵¹ He explained the world by reference to infinite and

⁴⁶ DK 31B frag. 134, in *ibid.*, p. 116.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 120–121.

⁴⁸ DK 31B frag. 146, in *ibid.*, p. 130.

⁴⁹ DK 31B frag. 147.

⁵⁰ DK 31B frag. 115.

⁵¹ Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, pp. 189–194.

eternal air. He, like Anaximenes (fl. ca. 548 B.C.E.),⁵² made air the primary substance of the universe and assigned to it intelligence and identified it with God. He claimed that humans and other animals, inasmuch as they breathe, live by air, which was the vivifying agent, or the soul. The human soul was thus air and a portion of God.

Medical writers of the epoch regarded breath as the agent giving life and intelligence, inspired by respiration and transmitted by the arteries.⁵³ They had an intuitive sense of oxygen, which is a life-sustaining component of the air. Obviously, the link between breath, life, and divinity was a common observation, and the conclusion drawn from it led to the formulation of vitalistic assertions about animating breath, *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), “spirit,” or “soul.” This also was the understanding of the human soul in the early Christian writings, where the Greek concepts of the *pneuma*, under the influence of the Essenes, replaced the Hebrew concepts of the soul, “life” (*nephesh*). Josephus wrote that the Essenes adopted the Greek Platonic view of the immortality of souls derived from the “most subtle air” and united to their bodies as in prisons.⁵⁴ This vitalistic conclusion still survives in religious systems, though in a somewhat more refined version. Nevertheless, the basis for the current religious concept of the soul is the observation and explanation given in antiquity.

Thus, air in the pre-Socratic metaphysics is for human beings both soul (Ψυχή) and intellect (νοῦς), and if this departs, they die.⁵⁵ The air pervades all things, possesses intelligence, governs all things, and is responsible in humans for their sensations and mental activity (φρονεῖν). It is breathed (Greek *pneuma* is breath or breathed air) in and circulates throughout the blood vessels.⁵⁶ The human soul is air and thus “a portion of God.” The Greek terms were translated directly into Latin, and the commonly used term “spirit” (*spiritus*) designates exactly the same things: *the action of breathing, a single breath; the air breathed into and expelled from the lungs; breath as the concomitant of life or consciousness; life, consciousness; the noncorporeal part of a person; the vital principle animating the world or a person.*⁵⁷ The terms fire, ether, and air should

⁵² Aëtius I.3.26; I.17, in *Doxographi graeci*; Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods (De natura deorum)*, translated by Horace C. P. McGregor with an introduction by J. M. Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), I.3.29.

⁵³ *The Sacred Disease* 10, *Hippocratic Writings*, edited with an introduction by G. E. R. Lloyd, translated by J. Chadwick, W. N. Mann, I. M. Lonie, and E. T. Withington (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 243; E. Littré, *Oeuvres complètes d'Hippocrate*, French translation with the Greek text, vols. 1–10 (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert Publisher, 1961; first edition, Paris, 1839).

⁵⁴ Josephus, *Complete Works*, translated by William Whiston, foreword by William Sanford LaSor (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981), *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII.1.5; *The Wars of the Jews*, II.8.11.

⁵⁵ Cicero, *De natura deorum* I.39, 49; Aëtius IV.3.8, in *Doxographi graeci*; Simplicius, in *Phys.* 151.2–153.22.

⁵⁶ Theophrastus, Fragmentum de sensibus, 47, in *Doxographi graeci*.

⁵⁷ *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, edited by P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

be thus considered as antecedents and equivalents of spirit used in modern times because they represent a substance that was considered “incorporeal” or the least corporeal.

PLATO AND HIS DUALISM

Plato (427–347 B.C.E.) was a creator of a strict dichotomal order of reality divided into Being and Becoming. The order of Being, defined as “that which always is and never becomes,”⁵⁸ was the real world consisting of the incorporeal Forms or Ideas (εἶδη), which are the objects of rational understanding and are comprehended only by intelligence, and of the operations of logic and mathematics. The Forms were also defined in Pythagorean terms as the Limit.⁵⁹ They serve as an intelligible and unchanging model for the formation of the universe perceived by the senses. The order of Becoming, defined as “that which is always becoming but never is,”⁶⁰ was the world of objects that are perceived by irrational senses and which are coming to be and are ceasing to be, and was governed by some cause. In *Philebus*, Plato described this realm of reality as the combination of matter, defined in Pythagorean terms as the Unlimited, and of the Forms. We cannot have any certain and final knowledge about this world. For Plato, empirical knowledge was uncertain and unsatisfactory and, as such, was proof of a rational and purposeful design of nature. The sensible world is a product of an intelligent action of its Maker (Δημιουργός), described variously as God, Father, Maker, Craftsman, One, or Mind, and is directed by intelligence for a good purpose, but it was formed from preexisting material.⁶¹

The obvious analogy is to a human craftsman who needs material to work on and a plan that serves as a model for his construction. In a similar way the divine Craftsman makes the universe out of preexistent chaos, “which is a nurse of becoming.” This material is initially described as the four traditional elements, earth, air, fire, and water, and later as the Receptacle of Becoming also defined as “the nurse of all Becoming and change” (πάσης εἶναι γενέσεως ὑποδοχὴν αὐτὴν οἶον τιθήνην). It consists of indeterminate “space” in which a disharmonious and disorderly motion takes place. This chaos takes the form of the qualities of the four elements when reduced to the four geometrical figures by the Creator: tetrahedron = fire, octahedron = air, icosahedron = water, cube = earth. The elements are visualized by Plato not as fixed things but rather as having different qualities. Plato compares this Receptacle to a mass of plastic material upon which differing impressions are stamped. As such, it has no definite character of its own.⁶²

⁵⁸ Plato, *Timaeus* 27a.

⁵⁹ Plato, *Philebus* 23c–27c.

⁶⁰ Plato, *Timaeus* 27a.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 49–50.

Plato next constructs a spherical world, highly organized, with a central earth and an outer sphere carrying the fixed stars. The planets are carried around on rings constructed within the outer sphere. Plato's world is hierarchical and was designed for a purpose and good. The motive of the Creator for creation of such a world was to make things as good as possible because he is good and wished all things to be like himself. So, in the Platonic system, goodness is coupled with purpose. "Thus God, wishing that all things should be good, reduced the visible universe to order from disorder, as he judged that order was in every way better."⁶³

Plato, as did the many pre-Socratics and Stoics, visualized the world as a living creature with intelligence and therefore a soul. When fashioning intelligence, the Maker implanted reason (νοῦς) in the soul (ψυχή) and the soul in the body (σώμα). So the world came to be through God's providence (πρόνοια) and is a living being (ζῶον) with soul and intelligence.⁶⁴ The model for the world is the "eternal living creature," which is the complex system of Forms whose likeness we can find in the world of Becoming. The world formed from the disordered primordial matter is a unique universe and God's "only creation" (μονογενής, *monogenēs*). It is a single complete whole consisting of parts and is subject neither to age nor to disease. Its figure is the one that contains within itself all possible figures – that is, the sphere and the extremes are equidistant in all directions. The world is endowed with a uniform circular motion on the same spot. This universe Plato treated as a created and blessed God (εὐδαίμονα θεός). The soul of the world was put in the center and diffused through the whole. It was made by mixing the three logical categories, Existence, Difference, and Sameness. The world thus is formed and is not eternal, though formed from eternal, preexistent, and unorganized matter. Each planet is a living creature, a compound of soul and body and thus a created god. Time is measured and detected by the movement of the sun, moon, and planets. The basic scheme of the world has a Pythagorean origin.⁶⁵

In his metaphysics, Plato differentiated several divine beings. The creator God, Demiurge, is a transcendental being and not an object of worship. In *Philebus*, Plato equates this God with Mind.⁶⁶ He is not equated with the supreme god of the Greek pantheon, Zeus, and he is not the personal, omnipotent god of the Jews or Christians, Yahweh. And he is not reason, Logos, immanent in the world of Stoic philosophers. This Platonic creator God is also a creator of traditional Greek gods subordinate to him. But Plato prefers not to talk about them referring us to the traditional sources:

It is beyond our powers to know or tell about the birth of the other gods.... We cannot distrust the children of the gods; even if they give no probable or necessary

⁶³ Ibid., 30a.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁶⁵ *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*.

⁶⁶ Plato, *Philebus* 30d–e.

proof of what they say, we must conform to custom and believe their account of their own family history. Let us therefore follow them in our account of the birth of these gods.⁶⁷

This statement of Plato amounts to an assertion accepting the accounts of Greek gods as revelation equivalent to the revelations of other religions. Other divine beings are the souls of the stars; the world soul; and, bridging the divine with the human element, the immortal parts of the human soul (power of reason and decision located in the head).⁶⁸

The immortal parts of human souls were created directly by Demiurge, Father of the universe, but the formation of the human bodies from the four elements he left to the created gods, for if they were created by him “they would be equal to God.” Thus, in order to have mortal creatures, the other gods must create them just as Demiurge did by weaving mortal and immortal together and creating a living creature.

The ingredients for the human soul are the same as for the world soul but “only not quite so pure.” And Demiurge allotted each soul to a star. They are told at their creation that any failure in living a good life in their first incarnation as man will lead to reincarnation as women first and then into some animal or lower animals suitable to the particular kind of wrongdoing and would have no respite until they bring under rational control their irrational feelings.⁶⁹ Thus they are destined for transmigration until they reach a liberated state.⁷⁰ Those, however, who would live well for their appropriate time would return to their native star and live an appropriately happy life. The other two mortal parts of the human soul are closely related to the physiological processes and are located in the heart (power of emotions and feelings) and in the abdomen (physical appetites). Plato makes a close connection between body and mind and between the mental and physical state, explaining that often wrongdoing is not a deliberate choice but a result of a failure of coordination between mind and body.

The world soul is an intelligence that permeates the world and is needed in the Platonic universe as a continuous force causing the regular motion of the heavenly bodies. In another place, Plato stated that the universe was given intelligence by the Creator.⁷¹ Thus, we may find here a doctrine of two Minds, one as permeating the universe and the other as imparted from the transcendent deity. In Plato’s metaphysics, the superior part of the human soul has a divine nature, and in this way humans partake of the divine Mind.⁷²

⁶⁷ Plato, *Timaeus* 40.

⁶⁸ In *Republic* 440e, Plato talks about three parts of the soul or mind. In *Phaedrus* 245d ff., Plato gives an allegorical description of the soul as a driver of a chariot with two horses. In *Timaeus* 69–73, three parts of the soul are differentiated and located in different parts of the body.

⁶⁹ Plato, *Timaeus* 41–42.

⁷⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus* 248c–249d; *Republic* 509a, 614–621.

⁷¹ Plato, *Politicus* 269d.

⁷² Plato, *Laws* XII.967a.

Also, the divine Mind was the agent that organized the visible world. In Plato's dynamics, bodies in motion must either have that motion imparted by another body or have within themselves a self-acting source of motion like living organisms that were endowed with a psyche, a life or soul. Thus, in this naïve explanation, soul was regarded as the only self-originating source of motion; therefore, the analogous world soul was responsible for keeping the heavenly bodies in motion. It is characteristic that from the physical motion of heavenly bodies, which were regular and irregular (equivalent to the logical categories Same and Different), Plato deduced two types of logical judgments in human rational thought.

XENOCRATES

Xenocrates of Chalcedon (d. 314 B.C.E.) was the second successor of Plato in his Academy after Speusippus.⁷³ We have only fragments of their writings and testimonies left by others about their doctrines. They both elaborated further on the existence of cosmic principles in Plato's *Philebus*,⁷⁴ already listed by Pythagoras. Eventually such speculations led to the abandonment of the theory of Ideas as separate entities and to postulating the Ideas as the thoughts of the divine intellect. As Pythagoras ascribed a great role to numbers and Plato described the cosmos as an expression of geometrical and mathematical regularities,⁷⁵ it seems that Speusippus and Xenocrates substituted numbers for the Ideas just fusing the ideal and mathematical entities. Xenocrates, however, claimed that there are no separate numbers from sensible things.⁷⁶

The Xenocrates philosophy constitutes an important transition to Middle Platonism. He derived everything that exists from the supreme Monad (ἐκ τοῦ ἑνός) identified with the Intellect and from the non-one (ἀενάον), which he identified with matter or the indefinite Dyad (ἡ ἀοριστος δυάς) because of its multiplicity.⁷⁷ He tried to preserve the Platonic concept of Ideas as the models of things, so he treated them as numbers because just as numbers were defining things, so Ideas were defining matter. They were invisible, comprehensible by the intellect, and incorporeal principles of the sensible reality imparted from the supreme Monad. As to the material of the sensible world, it was made of four simple and primary elements. These were organized into composed

⁷³ Senocrate, Ermodoro, *Frammenti*, edizione, traduzione e commento a cura di Margherita Isnardi Parente (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1982).

⁷⁴ Plato, *Philebus* 23c–27e.

⁷⁵ It is quite interesting to compare the mathematical-geometrical metaphysical concepts of nature with modern string theories. Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

⁷⁶ Xenocrates, frag. 112, in Senocrate, Ermodoro, *Frammenti*.

⁷⁷ Xenocrates, frag. 101.

entities analogically to the construction of the geometrical figures that were produced from the primary figures. Moreover, all reality was divided into three geometrical patterns according to the three types of triangles: the equilateral triangle represented unity, thus the soul of the Supreme Divinity; the isosceles represented equality and disequality, unity and variety, thus the soul of demonic beings having human passions and divine faculties; the scalene with all unequal sides represented the descending souls mixed with the material elements, thus human beings. Next, following his master, Xenocrates claimed that the universe was born out of disorder and brought into order by the divinity. But he defended Plato claiming that, when Plato said that the world was generated, he did not mean to say that the universe was generated in time but only intended to explain better that the cosmos derived from preexistent matter and from the form just analogical to the process of mathematical reasoning. And the cosmos had an indestructible nature, which meant that it persisted in existence by the will of the divinity that governed it. Thus he could clearly state: “The universe is eternal and ungenerated.”⁷⁸

We can reconstruct similarly Xenocrates’ psychology from the preserved fragments and testimonies.⁷⁹ According to a view found in all ancient philosophers, the soul has two characteristics: it is able to move by itself (therefore, able to move the passive body) and has consciousness. These two characteristics are essential properties of living matter. Thus the soul is the cause of life. Xenocrates is said to have claimed that the soul was the “number that moves by itself,” and because it defines the body, it is the component that gives the living being an impulse to move in a manner that is proper to it. It was explained that Xenocrates, by using the analogy of a number, wanted to indicate an intermediary character of the soul between the ideas *in se* and the things made on the model of ideas. Thus the concept of the number refers to the Idea; the concept of the movement refers to the things made on the model of ideas. In it, two realities are mixed together, the indivisible and the divisible, the intelligible (οὐσίᾳ νοερά) and the sensible. As such, the soul is life par excellence.

The nature of the soul was defined by Xenocrates as a mixture of the astral substance (which was either fire or ether) and the element earth. Because of this double character, some tried to fuse together Democritus’s doctrine of the soul as the corporeal with that of Xenocrates. But this double nature was similar to the nature of the demons, though they were closer to the divinity. Thus, sometimes the soul was called a “demon” as well, and those humans who had a “good demon” were called happy (εὐδαίμονες) because they had a soul perfect in virtues.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Xenocrates, frags. 92–122, 155–158.

⁷⁹ Xenocrates, frags. 165–212.

⁸⁰ Xenocrates, frag. 238.

In his theology, Xenocrates differentiated two cosmic principles as divinities – the Monad (ὁ μονάς) and the Dyad (ἡ δυάς).⁸¹ One was the masculine divinity and, as such, had a role of the Father and ruled in heaven. He proclaimed it to be the One (singular) and the intellect. This was the supreme deity, the First God, immovable and unchanging, called Zeus. The other was the feminine divinity, who had a role of the Mother of gods and ruled over the gods beneath the heaven – she was the Soul of the Universe. Clement of Alexandria ascribed to Xenocrates the distinction between Zeus the supreme God, the Father, and the other inferior God, the Son. Some claimed that Xenocrates differentiated eight gods (or groups of gods): the astral gods with the Olympians; the five planets; the whole of heaven as such (whose substance was ether); and the demons or Titans, the invisible demigods inhabiting the regions below the moon. There were also special divine powers residing in the corporeal elements (e.g., Poseidon, god of the humid element; Demeter, goddess of productive earth). The demons were gods located between the celestial divinity and the humans; and there were good and bad demons. They were susceptible to human passions and changeable because they had a corporeal admixture (of the element earth?) to their divine element.⁸² Demons were those who incited humans to all bad ceremonies and religious rites, to human sacrifices, and to wars; they inflicted humans with disasters and plagues. Others, including Tertullian, claimed that Xenocrates differentiated only two groups of gods: the astral Olympians and the Titans derived from earth. Thus, the astral bodies would be the instruments of the Monad, and the sublunary Titans and Demons linked to the invisible corporeal elements would represent the manifestations of the Dyad.

THE STOICS AND THEIR LOGOS

The Stoic philosophers fully used the idea of the Logos but transformed it into an immanent power, force, or law in reality.⁸³ The Stoic philosophy was the most important and influential development in Hellenistic philosophy, and it affected Christian writers and their moral thinking, and many philosophers. It was revived in the deism and naturalism of the Enlightenment and continues to affect modern thinking as well. It was founded by Zeno of Citium (333–262 B.C.E.) and developed by his successors Cleanthes (303–233 B.C.E.) and Chrysippus (ca. 280–ca. 208/4 B.C.E.).

⁸¹ Xenocrates, frags. 213–230.

⁸² Xenocrates, frags. 161, 225.

⁸³ *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, collegit Ioannes Ab Arnim (Stuttgartiae: in Aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1964), vols. 1–4 (hereafter *SVF*). Italian translation: *Frammenta: Gli Stoici. Opere e Testimonianze a cura di Margherita Isnardi Parente*, vols. 1–2 (Milano: TEA, 1994); A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

Like Aristotle, Stoics assumed a reality composed of two fundamental principles: matter and form. Matter constituted a passive, indeterminate principle (το πάσχον εἶναι τὴν ἄπειρον οὐσίαν), and form was the governing, active principle (τὸ ποιοῦν ... λόγον τὸν θεόν) constituting the nature of beings.⁸⁴ This form is an active principle that enlivens and vitalizes creatures. Following Heraclitus, the Stoics assumed that it is one and the same principle, Logos, that governs the thought and structure of the world, which was considered ideal because of its orderliness.⁸⁵ The Stoic philosophers (Zeno and Cleanthes) initially identified this all-pervasive Logos with celestial fire (πῦρ τεχνικόν = artistic, creative fire),⁸⁶ but, influenced by contemporary physiology and Diogenes of Apollonia, they came to view it as the creature's breath, that is, *pneuma* (a weightless permeation or, in modern terminology, spirit), which was a compound of cosmic fire and air.⁸⁷ By analogy with the living creature, the rational principle of the whole world was also identified with *pneuma* as an activating and vivifying principle. This principle, identical with God, accounts for differences in particular things by differentiations of itself. Thus, the human soul was also regarded as an offshoot of God.

This rational principle (and order) in nature was described under various names, Logos, Pneuma (πνεῦμα = breath, spirit), Fate, God, Providence, and, because of it the world was considered to be fully deterministic. This creative reason, the cosmic rational principle, was anticipated by Plato's "soul of the world" or "divine Craftsman."

According to the Stoics, God did not make the world as an artisan does his work, but he is the Demiurge of the universe by wholly penetrating all matter. They ascribed several properties and functions to the Logos (*pneuma*) to give it coherence and to hold together the other pair of elements, earth and water; it penetrates the whole cosmos, uniting its center with the circumference and, at the same time, preventing the universe from collapsing (unlike the other elements, *pneuma* does not have weight). It acts the same way in every living creature that also has a governing principle (*hegemonikon*). For the irrational animal, it is its soul. The nature or form of this principle for humans is reason or Logos.⁸⁸

Typical for the Stoics, as well as for Greek philosophy in general, is biological orientation. The Stoics considered the world itself as a living creature, governed by a rational principle, the Logos. From this follows that the connections between cause and effect in nature, and between premises and conclusions in the process of thought, are both governed by one and the same principle, the Logos. What is logical is natural at the same time. Truth, cause, nature,

⁸⁴ SVF, II.300.

⁸⁵ Cicero, *De natura deorum* II.16–39.

⁸⁶ SVF, I.120.

⁸⁷ SVF, III.300.

⁸⁸ SVF, III.310, 306; II.439; I.99; II.710, 714, 716; II.441, 448.

necessity – all of them partake of the Logos and represent different aspects of the same substance, a unity, that is, the Universe, Nature, or God.⁸⁹

All these terms – Soul of the world, Mind of the world, Nature, Providence, Craftsman, Logos, God – all refer to one and the same thing, an artistic and creative celestial fire, fiery and intelligent breath (πνεῦμα νοερόν καὶ πυρῶδες, πῦρ δυνάμεως, πῦρ τεχνικόν). Inasmuch as it is the principle controlling the universe, it is called the Logos. And inasmuch as it is the germ from which all other things develop, and their specific types are defined, it is called the seminal Logos (*logos spermatikos*). But the statement that Nature is the Logos is not a tautology because one has to differentiate between the meaning of the word and the thing to which it refers. For example, the nature of irrational animals is a soul and of men, the Logos, reason,⁹⁰ the rational act. Nature taken as a whole, as the governing principle of all things, is equivalent to the Logos, but as for particular living things, only some possess reason as a natural faculty. This Logos governing the world is, at the same time, a force, the natural law from which nothing can escape and which leads the entire world to a common end.

The concept and existence of God as divinity of nature were important in the Stoic and Greek philosophy. But again it is not the detached and transcendental God of the Hebrews, Plato, or Aristotle. Moreover, this divinity, even when treated as transcendent to the material world, is a part of larger Reality, Nature. Many arguments were used for justification of the existence of God or Gods. Cicero emphasized that the prevalence and strength of the human idea of divinity provided evidence of the necessary existence of God.⁹¹ Cleanthes referred to the validity of prophecy and divination, benefits men enjoyed from the earth, awe inspired by certain phenomena such as lightning or earthquakes, beauty, and the orderly movement of the heavens.⁹² Chrysippus reasoned that if there is something capable of producing, which human reason is incapable of, it must be better than man, “And what name rather than God would you give to this?”⁹³

Other arguments for the existence of God were developed from the concept of designs, such as that the existing world is the best of all possible worlds with a divine purpose immanent in it. This is a reversal of the Epicureans, though the Epicureans also did not approve of ceremonies; they rejected sacrifices, temples, and images and interpreted individual gods as names of natural phenomena (e.g., Hera or Juno as air) that were divine manifestations of the one ultimate deity, Nature, named Zeus. The divinity of the stars and

⁸⁹ *SVF*, II.913. Marcus Aurelius wrote: “One god, one substance, one law, common/or universal logos, and one truth.” Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, translated with an introduction by Maxwell Staniforth (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), VII.9.

⁹⁰ *SVF*, I.120, 158, 176; II.1009, 1132; III.323; II.714.

⁹¹ Cicero, *De natura deorum* II.5.

⁹² *Ibid.*, II.13–15.

⁹³ Chrysippus, in *ibid.*, II.16.

great heroes of the past represents the working of a cosmic reason in its most perfect form.⁹⁴

There are distinctions between Stoicism and Platonism on the one hand and Stoicism and Aristotelianism on the other. For Stoics, the Logos was immanent in the world, and everything that exists, exists necessarily in accordance with universal Nature and its rationality (Logos). Plato made a distinction between the realm of the world and the realm of the Forms, and Aristotle, between the celestial and sublunar realms, between contingency and necessity.

The soul for Plato is something incorporeal like the Form. The Stoics reject the Forms and make the soul along with their “artistic fire” a corporeal entity, but not matter. The closest approximation to our modern way of thinking would be to equate their artistic fire with a nonmaterial, “spiritual” substance. For Aristotle, nature is the cause, but he does not conceive nature as a rational agent. Though sometimes Aristotle speaks of nature as divine, God is not within the world. His God is a Prime Mover, a pure and detached mind, which acts on the world through the mediation of heavenly bodies. The Stoic Nature is a rational agent, an ultimate cause, but it is also a corporeal substance – an “artistic fire” that pervades all things.

A different interpretation of nature was offered by Strato of Lampsacus (contemporary of Zeno of Citium), who, together with many pre-Socratic philosophers before him,⁹⁵ denied any function of God in the explanation of the universe. Nature is for the Stoics the ultimate cause of all phenomena and is conceived in mechanical terms. Stoics looked for the ultimate cause of change within the world and, in the process, transformed the Aristotelian concept of matter and form. For them everything that exists must be corporeal, a kind of body because it must be able to produce or experience change. Zeno maintained that, if mind were an incorporeal entity, it would not be capable of any activity.⁹⁶ Consequently, Stoics claimed that justice and moral qualities must be bodies as well,⁹⁷ but that they are clearly different entities, principles, or starting points, and the active principle is Nature or God. Matter or substance is the passive principle without qualitative determination. Matter is inert and dormant, whereas the active principle is reason, which shapes matter and makes all things. The relationship between the two is a blending, a being. Thus, God is mixed with matter; he penetrates the whole of matter and shapes.⁹⁸ Matter is not equivalent to corporeality; it

⁹⁴ A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 14–74.

⁹⁵ Aëtius I.7.1–2, in *Doxographi graeci*; Cicero, *De natura deorum* I.35.

⁹⁶ *SVF*, II.359, 381, 525.

⁹⁷ Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantiis*, in *Complete Works*, vols. 1–6 (New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1909), vol. 6, 1042e.

⁹⁸ *SVF*, II.300; Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic (Epistulae morales ad Lucilium)*, selected and translated with an introduction by Robin Campbell (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987); *Ep.* 65.2; *SVF*, II.310.

is only one aspect of corporeality, which in any particular body is conjoined with the active component. Bodies in the Stoic system are compounds of matter and minds (God or Logos). Mind is something other than body but a necessary constituent of it, the reason in matter.

This position was derived from considering the world by analogy to a living being. Hence Zeno and Cleanthes identified the Logos with cosmic fire because it was believed that heat is something vital and active in a living creature. They claimed that all things capable of nurture and growth contain within themselves vital heat.⁹⁹ Heat was a cause of growth in every seed; thus, Stoics extended this biological notion to the whole universe. Nature, thus, is an artistic or creative fire, and God is the “seminal Logos” of the universe.¹⁰⁰ Matter is fiery because it is associated with the Logos. The final conflagration of the world *ekpyrosis* (ἐκπύρωσις), which will end each of the world cycles, is the resolution of all things into cosmic fire. During this process the supreme deity, which is equivalent to the Logos or Nature, is “wholly absorbed in his own thought.”¹⁰¹ But later from Chrysippus on, the Stoics identified the Logos throughout each cycle not with pure cosmic fire but with a compound of fire and air, that is, *pneuma*. *Pneuma* or breath was regarded by medical writers as the vital spirit transmitted via the arteries. Zeno connected fire and breath in his definition of the soul (“hot breath”). Thus, the same reasoning applied to the universe and to the living creature so that the *pneuma* became the vehicle of the Logos as both a physical and a rational component.¹⁰²

The Stoics developed an ingenious unified theory of the universe. Whereas for Heraclitus material constituents of the world were modifications of fire, for the Stoics cosmic fire was the only element that persisted forever. We can visualize this cosmic fire as Proclus, the fifth-century Platonic philosopher did, by describing it in those terms: “The celestial fire is not caustic, but is vivific in the same manner as heat which is naturally inherent in us.” This fire was a component of all stars, yet they had also other elements.¹⁰³ According to Aristotle, it emanated a certain illumination from which every animal received life. The dynamic disposition of matter causes it to take on other qualifications in the sublunar region of the world besides hot, such as cold, dry, and moist. Thus, matter with these respective qualities becomes air, fire, earth, or water, the traditional four elements of the Greek theory of matter. The four elements thus constitute two pairs: one active (fire and air = *pneuma*) and the other passive (earth and water). Once the cosmic fire gives

⁹⁹ Cicero, *De natura deorum* II.23.

¹⁰⁰ Diogenes Laertius VII.136, in *SVF*, I.580, and in *Doxographi graeci*, p. 782.

¹⁰¹ Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic*, Ep. 9.16.

¹⁰² *SVF*, II.473.

¹⁰³ *SVF*, II.413; Diadochus Proclus, in *Defense of the Timaeus of Plato against Objections Made to It by Aristotle*, in *Fragments of the Lost Writings of Proclus*, translated from the Greek by Thomas Taylor (Lawrence, KS: Selene Books, 1987), p. 9.

positive determination to air, this derived element joins with fire to produce the active component of the body, whereas earth and water constitute its passive counterpart.¹⁰⁴

So we have here a conceptual distinction between active and passive components of the universe or the Logos and matter that reflects the empirical distinction between *pneuma* and the elements of earth and water. At the same time, the pair of elements, earth and water, are not simply “matter” but a disposition of matter because they are engendered by fire. In a further elaboration of the structure of the universe, the universe becomes a sphere that is held together by *pneuma*; only earth and water have weight;¹⁰⁵ and *pneuma* pervades the whole sphere and prevents the universe from collapsing under its gravitational pull.

The *pneuma* functions also at the microcosmic level in every individual body. Organic and inorganic things owe their properties to the *pneuma*, which is a blend in different proportions of air and fire. The arrangements of *pneuma* can be, for example, the soul of an animal or the structure of a plant.¹⁰⁶ *Pneuma* operates basically by producing tension between parts, which represents “movement outward and inward.” Movement outward (expansion due to heat, fire) produces quantities and qualities, whereas movement inward (contraction due to cold, air) produces unity and substance.¹⁰⁷ The Stoic world picture is a dynamic continuum of all parts interconnected according to the mixture and tension of the *pneuma* that pervades them. The properties and movement of individual bodies are a consequence of a disposition of a single all-pervading substance. This picture is quite different from the model developed by other philosophers such as Epicurus, who assumed the existence of empty space and atoms, or Aristotle, for whom movement is in a continuous spatial medium, though this medium itself has no function. In modern times, the Stoic concept of *pneuma* was transformed into the ubiquitous ether or the field force activating matter. This reduction of qualitative distinctions between objects and within objects to states or dispositions of *pneuma* interacting with matter is probably the most interesting part of their philosophy of nature.

Because both matter and *pneuma* are corporeal (though *pneuma* is the most tenuous and the least corporeal), Stoics had to develop a special theory about how *pneuma* could interact with matter permeating it completely. They developed a theory of complete fusion or blending by which every particle shares in all the components of the mixture because a quantity of *pneuma* is such that a volume of it can simultaneously occupy the same space as a volume of matter¹⁰⁸ (just as later it was said about immaterial spirit). This

¹⁰⁴ SVF, II.418.

¹⁰⁵ SVF, II.439; I.99.

¹⁰⁶ SVF, II.716; II.441, 448.

¹⁰⁷ SVF, II.441; II.446, 450, 451, 458.

¹⁰⁸ SVF, III.473; III.477.

was necessary because the Stoics, in accordance with ancient theories, did not recognize action by distance.

Thus, Stoics maintained that everything that exists is a substance (or corporeal matter) with certain qualifications determined by the *pneuma*. The immaterial things, the so-called *lekta* (λεκτά) do not exist as do the substances, but they “subsist” as the content of thought, such as void, time, and place. Matter is a continuum (something that exists, τὰ or *quod est*) and is differentiated into separate parts or qualified by *pneuma* in such a way that each gives it characteristics that persist as long as *pneuma* persists.¹⁰⁹ Each qualified substance has an “individuating quality.” The matter or *pneuma* may be in a certain state or disposition, thus making this disposition responsible for the permanent or accidental characteristics of the individual. For example, the “soul is a *pneuma* in a certain state” possessed by every animal. Also, virtues or vices are a certain state of the *pneuma*. The disposition is thus something that permits us to describe individuals as having certain characteristics or properties, for example, being in some time, acting, having a certain size, being of a certain color.¹¹⁰

Stoics were the first philosophers who maintained systematically that all things are necessarily interrelated, such that “from everything that happens something else follows depending on it by necessity.” Chance was for them simply a name for undiscovered causes.¹¹¹ Because things in the world are related in one way or another (mutual relationship and interaction within the world Stoics called “sympathy”), Stoics postulated that they are related by relative disposition, that is, they depend on something else; for example, being a father entails a relationship with his child or children.¹¹² This idea may partially correspond to modern concepts of mutual interdependence in ecological terms. But it had much deeper significance for the Stoics because it also included a moral and psychological sense of relating to oneself, society, and the world. To be a happy and good man meant for the Stoics to be related to the universe, “to feel at home in the universe,” and related to other human beings in a manner according to reason. Marcus Aurelius wrote: “Neither can I be angry with my brother or fall foul of him; for he and I were born to work together,” and, “The chief good of a rational being is fellowship with his neighbours – for it has been made clear long ago that fellowship is the purpose behind our creation.”¹¹³

Individualism was antithetical to Stoicism. Because all things are interconnected, they have one universal cause that was “creative reason”

¹⁰⁹ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Academica*, text revised and explained by James S. Reid (London: Macmillan, 1885), II.85.

¹¹⁰ *SVF*, II.395; I.399–401.

¹¹¹ *SVF*, II.945; II.67.

¹¹² *SVF*, II.402–404.

¹¹³ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, II.1; V.16.

or the Logos, which is the indwelling cause of all things.¹¹⁴ A portion of this *pneuma* is in each substance; therefore, the substance is something particular, for example, a stone or a man. Every natural substance has a structure that is a causal component of anything predictable from its reaction to the external stimulus by its intrinsic structure.¹¹⁵ The *pneuma*, therefore, is the internal and external cause. This model was applied to human action,¹¹⁶ in which we have to distinguish the external stimulus and the mind's response. The stimulus causes an impression that presents the mind with a possible course of action. It is up to the individual as to how he is to respond.¹¹⁷ A deliberate act is thus a combination of an impression and an internal response exactly as Aristotle would define it.¹¹⁸ The Stoics and Aristotle did not look for a criterion of voluntary action in "being free to act otherwise." Thus, the character of an individual was the general cause of one's actions, which was a result of heredity and environment.¹¹⁹ Moral corruption was traced by the Stoics to persuasiveness of external affairs and communication with bad acquaintances.¹²⁰ In the last analysis, the Logos was the determining factor because it was all-pervasive. An individual's logos that assumes a particular identity is the real self of an individual. Its logos is the self-determining factor. Thus, the Stoic philosophy of Nature provided a rational explanation for all things in terms of the intelligent activity of a single entity that is coextensive with the universe.

In the Stoic worldview, the uncreated and imperishable Nature, God, Pneuma, or the universal Logos exercises its activity in a series of eternally recurrent world cycles beginning and ending as pure fire with each world. Within each cycle, Nature disposes itself in different forms: animal, vegetable, and mineral. Man is just one class of animals that is endowed with a share of its own essence and reason, in an imperfect but perceptible form. Nature as a whole is a perfect, rational being; all of its acts are the ones that should commend themselves to rational beings. If the "world is designed for the benefit of rational being," is there nothing bad within it? Here Stoics approach the problem of evil in the world and showed their utmost ingenuity.¹²¹ Stoics claimed that nothing is strictly bad except moral weakness. Natural disasters are not bad per se, and they do not undermine Nature. They have their own rationale peculiar to themselves, for, in a sense, they occur in accordance with universal reason and, as such, are not without usefulness in relation to the

¹¹⁴ Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, Ep. 65, 12–15.

¹¹⁵ *SVF*, II.979.

¹¹⁶ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Fate (De fato)* and Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy: IV* 5–7, edited with introduction, translation, and commentaries by R. W. Sharples (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1991), 39–44.

¹¹⁷ *SVF*, II.1000.

¹¹⁸ Aristotle, *De anima* III.10–11.

¹¹⁹ *SVF*, II.984; II.991.

¹²⁰ Diogenes Laertius VII.89; *SVF*, III.229–236.

¹²¹ Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantiis* 32–37.

whole. They are not Nature's plan but an unavoidable consequence of the good things that are. Thus, Nature plays a double role in any causal explanation.¹²²

But this Greek, metaphysical concept of the Logos is in sharp contrast to a concept of a personal God typical in Hebrew thought. Everything was determined by preexisting conditions, and it was believed that everything that happens was the best possible result of these conditions; thus, God, the Logos, Providence, aim at the good. This was an optimistic philosophy that oriented life in accord with Nature and the development of virtues, that is, the perfection of human nature, which is reason.¹²³ The moral ideal thus became a virtuous person who knows the good and acts in accord with it following the rational order.

Concerning human nature, Stoics gave the traditional answer: that it was the Mind that distinguished humans from other creatures. The concept was borrowed from Diogenes the Cynic (b. ca. 412 B.C.E.). This human rationality was understood as the practical wisdom of living in accordance with Nature. Individual human beings share this rational principle with Nature; thus it is a part of the world. They are endowed in varying degrees with "seed powers" (or *spermatikoi logoi*), which were part of the principle or Logos of God. Cosmic events and human actions are both consequences of one thing, the Logos. Therefore, humans have the ability to know the rational order governing the world, and this order is conceived as life-supporting breath or *pneuma* by analogy to the individual living creature. In Plato's idealism, mind and body were two distinct things. Modern psychology, physiology, neurology, and psychiatry provide evidence that there are no reasons to deny that mental processes are purely physical processes in the central nervous system.¹²⁴

Stoic theory thus has anticipated modern concepts because mind and matter are two constituents or attributes of one thing, the body. A man is a unified substance, but what he consists of is not uniform. All human attributes, according to the Stoics, are due to the permeation of matter by *pneuma*. The soul of man is a portion of the vital, intelligent, warm *pneuma* (breath) that permeates the entire cosmos¹²⁵ and the body. At death, the soul survives for a limited time only. And *pneuma* does not endow everything with life; only individual things with *pneuma* of a certain kind of tension are endowed with life. Depending on the type of tension, things are endowed with a different type of life, and only animal life and man have soul.¹²⁶ The soul has eight faculties or qualities; five of them are senses, and the other three are the faculties of

¹²² *SVF*, II.1118.

¹²³ Zeno and Chrysippus defined the goal of man as "to live in accordance with experience of natural events," *SVF*, I.179; III.5.

¹²⁴ Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

¹²⁵ Diogenes Laertius VII.156.

¹²⁶ *SVF*, II.714–716.

reproduction, speech, and the governing principle, the so-called *hegemonikon*, a principle “capable of commanding,” or “the most authoritative part of the soul.”¹²⁷ It is situated in the heart. From the heart it dispatches the other parts of the soul as “currents of warm breath” (*pneumata*) throughout the body, governing the body through them.¹²⁸ It is sensitive to the messages it receives from the external world and the internal bodily states by means of the air currents that it administers.

This governing principle is the seat of consciousness and to it belong all the functions that we would associate with the brain. One function is called “impulse” (ὄρμη), “a movement of thought toward or away from something,”¹²⁹ which initiates an impression. Impression and impulse provide the causal explanations of goal-oriented animal movements. Creatures are genetically determined to show aversion and preference, and they are well disposed toward themselves. The technical term describing this relationship to the environment is *oikeiōsis* (οἰκειωσις), a “self-awareness.” Behavior depends on animal or human recognition of the object as belonging to itself by its faculty of “assent.”¹³⁰ But we are not impelled or repelled by things that we fail to recognize as a source of advantage or harm.¹³¹ This faculty impels us to select things necessary for self-preservation and not necessarily by reason. An infant is “not yet rational” as it takes about seven years to develop the logos.¹³² Impulse thus governs the behavior of humans in the earliest years, and the first thought is self-preservation. Gradually, as the child develops, its governing principle is modified by accretion of the logos, then “reason [becomes] supreme as the craftsman of impulse.”¹³³ Reason, however, does not destroy the earlier impulses; rather, they are taken over by reason.

Thus, human nature develops from something that is nonrational to a structure governed by reason, which in turn brings a change in the direction of impulse.¹³⁴ Now new objects of desire develop, and virtue becomes a human characteristic.¹³⁵ This process is a natural development toward a moral life described by Epictetus of Hierapolis (60–ca. 120 C.E.):

But God has introduced man, as a spectator of himself and of his works; and not only as spectator, but as an interpreter of them. It is therefore shameful for a man to begin

¹²⁷ Diogenes Laertius VII.59.

¹²⁸ *SVF*, II.879.

¹²⁹ *SVF*, III.377.

¹³⁰ *SVF*, II.171.

¹³¹ *SVF*, II.979, 991.

¹³² Aëtius IV.11.4, in *Doxographi graeci*; Sénèque, *Lettres à Lucillius*, texte établi par François Préchac et traduit par Henri Noblot, Tomes I–VII (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1964), Tome V, *Ep.* 124.9.

¹³³ Diogenes Laertius VII.86.

¹³⁴ Cicero, *De natura deorum* II.29; Sénèque, *Lettres à Lucillius*, Tome V, *Ep.* 121, 10.

¹³⁵ Cicero, *Du bien suprême et des maux les plus graves (De Finibus)*, traduction nouvelle avec notice et notes par Charles Appuhn (Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères, 1938), III.20.

and end where irrational creatures do. He is indeed to begin there, but to end where nature itself has fixed our end; and that is, in contemplation and understanding, and in a scheme of life harmonious with nature.¹³⁶

Attainment of rationality alters the whole structure of an individual's governing principle. Human behavior is a mode of rational conduct, which is the use of faculties for the purpose designed by universal natural law. Even the actions that we usually describe as an irrational impulse are in fact governed by the rational principle in the sense that they produce a judgment (intellectual assent) that moves to action, the movement of the soul. So the distinction is between the right reason (εὐλόγος, *eulogos*) and wrong reason (ἄλόγος, *alogos*).¹³⁷ Therefore, everything that we do is rational in a sense, but the sage or the good man is the criterion, because he alone has the right reason in a consistent way. We fluctuate between right and wrong reason, and we make moral progress not by extirpating the desires and emotions but by making them increasingly consistent with the right reason.¹³⁸

The Stoic concept of the Logos can be summarized as follows:

1. Logos is the power or principle that shapes and creates all things from itself, in the final analysis.¹³⁹ Logos is immanent in the existing world.
2. According to Stoic metaphysics, to exist something must have body; also, if mind were incorporeal, then it would not be capable of any activity.¹⁴⁰
3. Logos, the power or principle that unifies and gives coherence to the world, was metaphysically associated with the artistic, self-moving, and generative fire by Zeno and Cleanthes, and from Chrysippus with fire and air – *pneuma*.¹⁴¹ This was done through analogy with the living creatures, which required, in accordance with the physiological theories of the epoch, heat and breath, that is, hot breath as a vivifying agent. Thus, *pneuma* became the vehicle of the Logos.
4. It is the Soul of the world, Mind of Nature, Nature, God. Nature is an artistic or creative fire, and thus God is the seminal Logos of the universe.¹⁴²
5. The *pneuma*, though corporeal, is not matter itself. *Pneuma*, unlike other elements, pervades the universe and establishes the individual parts of it.¹⁴³ It gives coherence and holds together other elements, unites the

¹³⁶ Epictetus, *Discourse and Enchiridion*, based on translation of Thomas Wentworth Higginson with an introduction by Irwin Edman (Roslyn, NY: Walther J. Black, 1944), I.6.19–20.

¹³⁷ *SVF*, II.899; III.5, 175, 438, 466, 488; I.203; III.468.

¹³⁸ *SVF*, III.175, 570–571; III.459; III.278.

¹³⁹ *SVF*, II.937.

¹⁴⁰ *SVF*, II.359, 381; Cicero, *De natura deorum* I.39.

¹⁴¹ *SVF*, II.1132.

¹⁴² Diogenes Laertius VII.136.

¹⁴³ *SVF*, II.441, 448, 451.

center of the universe with its circumference, and prevents the universe from collapsing under the heavy pull of its heavy constituents (*pneuma* does not have weight).¹⁴⁴

6. This principle is manifested as Natural Law, Necessity, and Destiny.¹⁴⁵ It functions at the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels as God, Providence, Craftsman, and the “right reason” at the moral level.¹⁴⁶
7. It operates in plants, animals, and man manifested respectively as a particular nature *physis*, “soul,” or “logos.”¹⁴⁷ The human “soul” is thus an “offshoot” of the divine Logos. If breath and heat are necessary according to physiological doctrines of the epoch, then the human soul is, according to Zeno, a “hot breath.”

¹⁴⁴ *SVF*, II.439; I.99.

¹⁴⁵ *SVF*, II.913.

¹⁴⁶ *SVF*, I.158, 176; III.323.

¹⁴⁷ *SVF*, II.441, 448, 460, 473, 634, 710, 716, 804, 1013.

The Logos in Judaism

THE HEBREW CONCEPT OF *DAVAR* (*LOGOS*)

In the Septuagint (designated later as LXX) version of the Old Testament, the term *logos* (Hebrew *davar*) was used frequently to describe God's utterances (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9; 3:9, 11; Ps. 32:9), God's action (Zech. 5:1–4; Ps. 106:20; 147:15), or spoken voice, and messages of prophets by means of which God communicated his will to his people (Jer. 1:4–19; 2:1–7; Ezek. 1:3; Amos 3:1). Usually it is expressed in the form “And God said” (καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς). It is a translation from the same Hebrew expression (וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים). *Davar* is used there as a figure of speech designating God's activity or action. And this is emphasized by using the verb in the third-person singular (from the Greek λέγω or Hebrew דָּבַר).

In the ancient Near East, it was a widely spread conceptual anthropomorphic device to express the action of a supreme divinity or a divine principle. The myth of creation by a spoken word (*logos*) goes back to the First Dynasty in Egypt, where we find such stories in the texts entitled *Memphis Theology of Creation*, *Hymn to Ptah*, and *Hymn to Ra*. Here is probably the beginning of the *logos* doctrine in general and especially of the Hebrew *logos* as it was absorbed in the creation story.¹ The first principle, Ptah, through his thought and his words, created or formed everything and brought it into order. Moreover, he not only creates everything from him but also rules over the world and over humans, rewarding or punishing them for their behavior.

This Hebrew concept of *logos* will be invoked in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel. Here the Hebrew *logos* will be expressed substantively in the man Jesus. How this happened is explained by Michael Servetus (1511–1553),

¹ *The Memphis Theology of Creation*, translated by John A. Wilson in *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, edited by James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 1–2; Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, fully revised and expanded edition (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), *Hymn to Ptah*, pp. 3–5; *Hymn to Ra*, pp. 6–8.

sixteenth-century biblical scholar, using the Hellenistic concept of substance. According to Servetus, the Hebrew scripture invoking the concept of *davar*, logos, does not indicate the existence of a separate entity within God:

The Word [Logos] that constitutes the manifestation of God was located in this God as a visible essence by means of a divine arrangement; it is an apparition in the clouds such that whoever hears and sees the Word [Logos] does so by the grand design of God.²

For Servetus, the uttered Logos (Word) of God constitutes the manifestation of God within God, which can be expressed in various forms. It became the human Jesus, a human being through a process of procreating in the Greek manner: the very Word [Logos] is the literal seed of generation that sprouted in Mary and yielded fruit.³ Thus, the human Jesus, not the Logos, can be considered the Son of God, the natural Son of God.

JEWISH WISDOM LITERATURE

In the so-called Jewish wisdom literature, we find the concept of Wisdom (*chokhmah* and *sophia*) (Proverbs, fifth century B.C.E.; 8:22–31; the Wisdom of Solomon, in the second century B.C.E.; 7:22, 25–27; 9:1–2, 9; 18:15; the Wisdom of Ben Sirach, also in the second century B.C.E.; 24:1–22), which deals with the essential questions and problems related to human existence: How to conduct our life? How to think about death? Why is there suffering? Why do the good people sometimes suffer while the wicked prosper? This literature was the product of observations and contemplation made by sages. Ancient Israel like other neighboring nations had men and women who were famed and praised for their wisdom. The biblical wisdom literature has its beginning in the tenth century but it is preceded by a long history of the ancient Near Eastern texts from Egypt, Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria, which constitute its source.⁴ It seems that in Israel this type of literature gained the official support

² Michael Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio*, English translation: *The Restoration of Christianity: An English Translation of Christianismi restitutio (1553) by Michael Servetus (1511–1553)*, translated by Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), p. 71.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴ Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*; Matthews and Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*; W. McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (Philadelphia: Old Testament Library, 1970); J. M. Thompson, *The Form and Function of Proverbs of Ancient Israel* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974); W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996; reprint of 1960 edition); H. H. Rowley, ed., *The Old Testament and Modern Study: A Generation of Discovery and Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951); Glen E. Bryce, *A Legacy of Wisdom: The Egyptian Contribution to the Wisdom of Israel* (Lewistown, PA: Associated University Press, 1979); William Sanford Lasor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic W. M. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1982; reprint 1992), pp. 532–610; Amar Annus and

of the rulers since Solomon (1 Kgs. 4:29–34). Some scholars tried to associate this genre of literature with the establishment of schools on the model of the Greek philosophical schools, but there is no evidence for this. The first mention of any Jewish school comes in the second century B.C.E. in the Greek text of the Wisdom of Ben Sirach (51:23). It seems that this wisdom literature is the closest Hebrew approximation to the reflective thought the Greeks described as philosophy. Though wisdom literature has a direct practical relevance to the problems of moral behavior of individuals, for ways how to achieve personal happiness and welfare, it was not a secular literature. All wisdom stemmed from God and could be received only by devout worshippers.

For us, special importance acquires personification or individualization of wisdom. Wisdom is presented in Proverbs as a woman passing through the streets pleading with people to follow her instructions and abandon their foolish ways, to “fear the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:5). She claims to have been created by God before anything else and even to have assisted in the creation of the world (Prov. 8:22–30; Sir. 24:9). But she is with God, for he created the world “by understanding” (Prov. 3:19). In the Wisdom of Solomon, she is presented as “a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the power of the Almighty” (Wis. 7:25). In Wisdom 9:1–2 she seems to be identified with God’s Word (Logos), and she was present when God made the world (Wis. 9:9).

This concept of wisdom was created and used for the evaluation of crises in Jewish history, which seemed to indicate that there was no longer any wisdom in the world. To keep the memory of wisdom alive, the writers of these books presented it as to be found only with God, imparted to those who feared God. In the Hebrew culture, it was a part of the metaphorical and poetic language describing divine wisdom as God’s attribute, and often it is clearly referred to as a human characteristic in the context of human earthly existence.

The prologue of the Fourth Gospel of John seems to fuse the concept of Hebrew Logos with that of Wisdom. Both exist from the beginning, participate in or are agents of creation, and are life supporters. This was observed by a biblical scholar, C. H. Dodd, who clearly stated that, “while the Logos [the Logos of John’s prologue] has many of the traits of the Word of God in the Old Testament, it is on the other side a concept closely similar to that of Wisdom, that is to say, the hypostatized thought of God that projected in the creation remaining as an immanent power within the world and in man.”⁵

Alan Lenzi, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi, the Standard Babylonian Poem of Righteous Sufferer*, with introduction, cuneiform text, and transliteration, with a translation and glossary (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010).

⁵ C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 275.

PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA: HIS LIFE AND IMPORTANCE

The Greek metaphysical concept of the Logos and the transcendent God is in sharp contrast to the concept of a personal God described in anthropomorphic terms typical of Hebrew thought. Thus, when Hebrew mythical thought met Greek philosophical thought, it was only natural that some would try to develop speculative and philosophical justification for Judaism in terms of Greek philosophy. Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.E.–50 C.E.), a Hellenized Jew, was a figure who spanned two cultures, the Greek and the Hebrew. Thus, Philo produced a synthesis of both traditions developing concepts for future Hellenistic interpretation of messianic Hebrew thought, especially by Clement of Alexandria; Christian Apologists such as Athenagoras, Theophilus, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian; and Origen. He may have influenced Paul, his contemporary, and perhaps the authors of the Gospel of John⁶ and the Epistle to the Hebrews.⁷ In the process, he laid the foundations for the development of Christianity in the West and in the East, as we know it today.⁸

Not much is known about the life of Philo. He lived in Alexandria, which at that time counted, according to some estimates, about one million people and included the largest Jewish community outside of Palestine. He came from a wealthy and prominent family and appears to be a leader in his community. Once he visited Jerusalem and the temple, as he himself stated in *Providence* 2.64.

Philo's brother, Alexander, was a wealthy, prominent Roman government official, a customs agent responsible for collecting dues on all goods imported into Egypt from the East. He donated money to plate the gates of the temple in Jerusalem with gold and silver. He also made a loan to Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great.⁹ Alexander's two sons, Marcus and Tiberius Julius Alexander, were involved in Roman affairs. Marcus married Bernice,¹⁰ the daughter of Herod Agrippa I, who is mentioned in Acts (25:13, 23; 26:30). The other son, Tiberius Julius Alexander, described by Josephus as "not remaining true to his ancestral practices," became procurator of the province of Judea (r. 46–48 C.E.) and prefect of Egypt (r. 66–70 C.E.).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ronald Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970).

⁸ *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, translated by C. D. Yonge, new updated ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995); Philo of Alexandria, *The Contemplative Life, The Giants, and Selections*, translation and introduction by David Winston, preface by John Dillon (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), introduction, p. 36. The Greek texts of Philo's works: *Philonis Judaei Opera Omnia*, textus editus ad fidem optimarum editionum. (Lipsiae: Sumptibus E. B. Schwickerti, 1828–1829), vols. 1–6; *Philonis Alexandrini Opera Quae Supersunt*, ediderunt Leopoldus Cohn et Paulus Wendland (Berolini: Typis et impensis Georgii Reimeri/Walther de Gruyter, 1896–1930), vols. 1–7; Marian Hillar, *Philo of Alexandria*, The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2002), <http://www.iep.utm.edu/philo/>.

⁹ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.159–160; *Jewish War* 5.205.

¹⁰ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 19.276–277.

Philo was involved in the affairs of his community, which interrupted his contemplative life (*Spec. leg.* 3.1–6), especially during the crisis relating to the pogrom that was initiated in 38 C.E. by the prefect Flaccus, during the reign of Emperor Gaius Caligula. He was elected to head the Jewish delegation, which apparently included his brother Alexander and nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander, and was sent to Rome in 39–40 B.C.E. to see the emperor. He reported the events in his writings *Against Flaccus* and *The Embassy to Gaius*.

Philo's primary importance is in the development of the philosophical and theological foundations of Christianity. The church preserved the Philonic writings because Eusebius of Caesarea¹¹ labeled the monastic ascetic group, the Therapeutae and Therapeutrides described in Philo's *The Contemplative Life*, as Christians, which is highly unlikely.¹² Eusebius also promoted the legend that Philo met Peter in Rome. Jerome (345–420 C.E.) even lists him as a church father,¹³ and in the Byzantine excerpts from scriptural commentators, *Catena* (fifth to sixth century), Philo is listed under the heading of "Philo bishop." The legend of *Philo Christianus* was initiated before, probably by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 220 C.E.), the first church father who quotes him explicitly, and he was maintained thus until the Middle Ages.¹⁴

Jewish tradition was uninterested in philosophical speculation and did not preserve Philo's thought. According to H. A. Wolfson,¹⁵ Philo was the founder of religious philosophy, a new approach to philosophy. Philo was a most visible

¹¹ Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (hereafter *H.E.*), translated with introduction by G. A. Williamson (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), 2.17.1.

¹² The view that the Therapeutae were Christians survived until the Middle Ages when the Protestants began to consider them to be Jews. Today opinions are divided, but all evidence indicates that they were remnants of the Buddhist tradition (Theravadins) introduced by the missionaries sent by King Asoka in the third century B.C.E. to King Ptolemy II Philadelphos (Elmar R. Gruber and Holger Kersten, *The Original Jesus: The Buddhist Sources of Christianity* [Shaftesbury: Elements, 1995], pp. 176–186; Z. P. Thundy, *Buddha and Christ* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993]). The name Therapeutae is of Buddhist origin. It is the Hellenized form of the Sanskrit/Pali term Theravadins, who were members of the Buddhist missionary order Theravada (= Teachings of the Old Ones) founded during the reign of King Asoka (274–232 B.C.E.) with the main center at Gandhara. The members of this order called themselves Theraputta (Sons of the Old Ones). They were also, according to Asoka's edict, preserved on a rock inscription, to provide medical assistance, which was a common occupation of the Buddhist monks (Buddha was also extolled as the King of Medicine). Thus, Philo linked the name of the sect with two Greek terms $\theta\epsilon\rho\alpha\pi\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\omega$ (*therapeuo* = I cure, I heal; I do service) and $\theta\epsilon\rho\alpha\pi\epsilon\iota\alpha$ (*therapeia* = service; medical attendance; worship) as "healers of souls." He also calls them "suppliants" and "beggars," which terms are connected with the Sanskrit name of the monks *bhikshu* (beggars).

¹³ Jerome Eusebius Hieronymus Stridensis Presbyter, *De viris illustribus* chap. 11, in Migne, PL 23.

¹⁴ David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Assen: Van Gorcu; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 4–7, 28–29; Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 446–452.

¹⁵ H. A. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), vols. 1–2.

representative of Hellenistic Judaism and had a role in the development of post-Nicaean philosophical Christianity. Hellenistic Judaism was one of the primary sources in the development of the earliest stages of Christianity. Thus, many similarities between Philo and the early Christian writings may be simply attributed to their common background.¹⁶

Philo was thoroughly educated in Greek philosophy and culture, as can be seen from his superb knowledge of classical Greek literature. He had a deep reverence for Plato and referred to him as “the most holy Plato.”¹⁷ Philo’s philosophy represented contemporary Platonism, which was its revised version incorporating Stoic doctrine and terminology via Antiochus of Ascalon (ca. 90 B.C.E.) and Eudorus of Alexandria (fl. first century B.C.E.), as well as elements of Aristotelian logic and ethics and Pythagorean ideas. Clement of Alexandria even called Philo “the Pythagorean.”¹⁸ But it seems that Philo also picked up his ancestral tradition, though as an adult, and once having discovered it, he put forward the teachings of the Jewish prophet Moses, as “the summit of philosophy”¹⁹ and considered Moses the teacher of Pythagoras and of all Greek philosophers and lawgivers (Hesiod, Heraclitus, and Lycurgus, to mention a few). For Philo, Greek philosophy was a natural development of the revelatory teachings of Moses. He was no innovator in this matter because already before him Jewish scholars attempted the same. Artapanus in the second century B.C.E. identified Moses with Musaeus and with Orpheus. According to Aristobulus of Paneas (first half of the second century B.C.E.), Homer and Hesiod drew from the *Books of Moses*, which were translated into Greek long before the Septuagint.²⁰

But Philo did not operate in isolation because a rich variety of groups, sects, trends, and practices existed in Judaism, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora in the last few centuries before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. They eventually developed into two movements that survived, rabbinic Judaism and Christianity.²¹ Major components of future Christianity were the ideas developed in Hellenistic Judaism, which flourished primarily in Alexandria, and the messianic traditions of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which became fully expressed in the historical context of the first century C.E. in Palestine.

PHILO’S ANTECEDENTS

Among the precursors of Philo we have to place Aristobulus, who is considered the first Jewish philosopher. He came from a high priestly family in

¹⁶ Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature*, pp. 64–66.

¹⁷ *Prob.* 13.

¹⁸ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I.15.

¹⁹ *Op.* 8.

²⁰ Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 9.27; 13.11.

²¹ M. Stone, *Scriptures, Sects, and Visions* (London: Collins Press, 1980), pp. 46–56.

Alexandria and lived during the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometer (r. ca. 181–145 B.C.E.).²² He is mentioned by several Christian writers, and five fragments of Aristobulus's writings are preserved by Eusebius in his *Praeparatio evangelica* and by Clement of Alexandria.²³ His treatise *Exposition of the Law of Moses* was dedicated to the king and was probably written in the form of a dialogue in which Aristobulus answered questions posed by the king, thus a form similar to that of Philo's *Questions and Solutions*.

The fragments indicate the influence of Greek Platonic and Pythagorean thinking and have an apologetic character. The dominant theme is the demonstration that Jewish philosophy found in Mosaic Law has many common points with Greek philosophy and ideas. Thus, Aristobulus concludes in his fragment 3 that Plato and Pythagoras developed their ideas from Jewish Law, which was allegedly known from a pre-Alexandrian translation. Similarly, Philo claimed Jewish Law as the source of Heraclitus's theory of the opposites, of Greek legislation, and of Zeno's philosophy.²⁴

The second major problem remained, however, how to explain the anthropomorphic representation of the divinity in the Jewish tradition. Aristobulus solved it by allegorical or quasi-allegorical analysis of this anthropomorphism when, in fragment 4, he explains the proper understanding of the phrase "the divine word" not as a real spoken "word" but as preparation for the act of creation. This conclusion is supposedly justified by Genesis 1, which relates both things "and God said, and it was done." For Philo, God's word (Logos) was a deed: "God spoke and at the same time acted, ... this word was deed" (*Sacr.* 65).

One of the other problems tackled by Aristobulus in this fragment is the existence of the invisible God of creation and his rule. And he cites a fragment from an alleged Orphic poem (a Jewish fabrication) and from the Stoic poet Aretus's *Phaenomena*²⁵ ("For we too are his offspring") in support of his

²² 2 Macc. 1:10; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.150:1–3; Eusebius, *H.E.* 7.32.16 (where not reliable dating is given); Eusebius, *Die Praeparatio Evangelica*, Bearbeitete Auflage herausgegeben von Édouard des Places, 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1982, 1983), 9.6:6; 8.9:38; Peder Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early Christianity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 7–16; Heinrich and Marie Simon, *Filozofia żydowska (Geschichte der jüdischen Philosophie)* (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1984), translated by Tomasz Pszczółkowski (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1990), pp. 23–26.

²³ Eusebius, *H.E.* 7. 32.17–18 (frag. 1); *Praeparatio evangelica* 8.10:1–17 (frag. 2); 13.12:1–2 (frag. 3); 13.12:3–8 (frag. 4); 13.12:9–16 (frag. 5), also in 7.14:1; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, bks. 1, 5, 6 (parts of frags. 2–5); *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), vol. 2, pp. 831–836; Borgen, *Philo, John and Paul*, pp. 7–16; N. Walter, *Der Thoraausleger Aristobulos* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1964).

²⁴ E. Stein, *Die allegorische Exegese des Philo aus Alexandria* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1929), pp. 10–11; M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (London: SCM Press, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 165–166.

²⁵ Aretus's poem *Phaenomena* is quoted in Acts 17:28.

Hellenistic view of God. He admits that others had a "Sacred Book," which he attributes to Orpheus, and their philosophers had a system of values. However, their concept of God and their philosophy are inferior to those of Moses.

In fragments 1 and 5, Aristobulus discusses the interpretation of the feasts of the Sabbath and Passover on the basis of the creation story in Genesis and the words of Wisdom in Proverbs. He interprets creation in six days as an allegorical establishment of the course of time for created things. Thus, Aristobulus accepted the Greek idea of timeless activity of God, who is not subject to time. Philo more explicitly stated that time was formed as part of creation and did not exist before it (*LA* 1.2; *Op.* 26; *Sacr.* 68).

In his interpretation of the Sabbath, Aristobulus makes the number seven a governing principle of the universe, which introduces an order. The Sabbath thus is a visible manifestation of the cosmic order, Wisdom. The Sabbath and the number seven are also symbols of our "sevenfold Logos" which is the basis of our knowledge of human and divine things. A similar interpretation of Wisdom we find in the fourth book of Maccabees (1:16). Referring to Proverbs 8:22, Aristobulus states that Wisdom was created before heaven and earth; moreover, all light comes from Wisdom (cf. *Wis.* 7:22–26). According to Aristobulus, even some Greek philosophers recognized the value of Wisdom, the following of which allows a peaceful and satisfactory life. Correspondingly, Philo associated Logos with the invisible light perceptible only by the mind and which is distributed to humans as an image of the divine Logos (*Op.* 31). The concept of the primal light as the divine substance was current in Judaism and the Hebrew Bible and was subject to various interpretations.

In fragment 1 Aristobulus also discusses the question of the calendar as to when to celebrate the Passover. He uses the Hellenistic solar calendar developed by the Egyptians and adopted also by the Essenes.

Fragment 2 is devoted to the discussion of the anthropomorphic concept of God and is presented in the form of King Ptolemy's concern about ascribing to God bodily functions and passions. Aristobulus argues that all anthropomorphic representations of God should be interpreted only as allegorical and metaphorical. The same interpretation of an anthropomorphic representation of God we find also in the writings of Philo.²⁶ Both Aristobulus and Philo adopted the allegorical interpretation of the Jewish sacred writings from the Stoics, who used it to interpret the Greek poets Homer and Hesiod.

Aristobulus and Philo were the products of a trend in Jewish ideology that attempted, in confrontation with the Greek culture, to assert itself as a valid cosmic view to support the existence of a community. Aristobulus may be considered as among the first who attempted to build a bridge between these two civilizations and tried to adapt Jewish Law to the new ideological situation.

²⁶ C. Fritsch, *The Anti-Anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943).

Such an attitude found its culminating expression in the Hellenistic system of Philo. The early Christian writers in the postevangelical or apologetical period in turn used Aristobulus and Philo to show continuity of some of their assertions with Jewish tradition and the superiority for Christianity over the native religion of the Gentiles.

PHILO'S WORKS AND THEIR CLASSIFICATION

The major part of Philo's writings consists of philosophical essays dealing with the main themes of biblical thought that present a systematic and precise exposition of his views. One has the impression that he attempted to show that the philosophical Platonic or Stoic ideas were nothing but deductions made from the biblical verses of Moses. Philo was not an original thinker, but he was well acquainted with the entire range of Greek philosophical traditions from the original texts. If there are gaps in his knowledge, they are rather in his Jewish tradition, as evidenced by his relying on the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. In his attempt to reconcile the Greek way of thinking with his Hebrew tradition, he had antecedents such as Pseudo-Aristeas and Aristobulus.

Philo's works are divided into three categories:

1. The first group comprises writings that paraphrase the biblical texts of Moses, for example, *On Abraham*, *On the Decalogue*, *On Joseph*, *The Life of Moses*, and *On the Creation of the World*. A series of works include allegorical explanations of Genesis 2–41: *On Husbandry*, *On the Cherubim*, *On the Confusion of Tongues*, *On the Preliminary Studies*, *On the Giants*, *Allegorical Interpretation (Allegory of the Law)*, *On the Migration of Abraham*, among other titles. Here belong also *Questions and Answers on Genesis* and *Questions and Answers on Exodus* (aside from fragments preserved only in Armenian).
2. In the second group are a series of works classified as philosophical treatises: *Every Good Man Is Free* (a sequel of which had the theme that every bad man is a slave, which did not survive); *On the Eternity of the World*; *On Providence* (except for lengthy fragments preserved in Armenian); *Alexander, or On Whether Brute Animals Possess Reason* (preserved only in Armenian) and called in Latin *De Animalibus (On the Animals)*; and a brief fragment *De Deo (On God)*, preserved only in Armenian, which is an exegesis of Genesis 18 and belongs to the *Allegory of the Law*.
3. The third group includes historical-apologetic writings: *Hypothetica* or *Apologia Pro Judaeos*, which survives only in two Greek extracts quoted by Eusebius. The first extract is a rationalistic version of Exodus giving a eulogic account of Moses and a summary of the Mosaic constitution contrasting its severity with the laxity of the Gentile laws; the second extract describes the Essenes. The other apologetic essays include

Against Flaccus, *The Embassy to Gaius*, and *On the Contemplative Life*. But all these works are related to Philo's explanations of the texts of Moses.

TECHNIQUE OF EXPOSITION

Philo uses an allegorical technique for interpretation of the Hebrew myth, and in this he follows the Greek tradition of Theagenes of Rhegium (second half of the sixth century B.C.E.). Theagenes used this approach in defense of Homer's theology against its detractors. He said that the myths of gods struggling with each other referred to the opposition between the elements; the names of gods were made to refer to various dispositions of the soul, for example, Athena was reflection; Aphrodite, desire; Hermes, elocution.

Anaxagoras, too, explained the Homeric poems as discussions of virtue and justice. The Sophist Prodicus of Ceos (460–395 B.C.E.), contemporary of Socrates, interpreted the gods of Homeric stories as personifications of those natural substances that are useful to human life (e.g., bread and Demeter, wine and Dionysus, water and Poseidon, fire and Hephaestus).²⁷ He also employed ethical allegory. His treatise, *The Seasons*, contains a parable on Heracles, paraphrased in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (2.1.21–34), which tells the story of Heracles, who, at a crossroads, was attracted by Virtue and Vice in the form of two women of great stature (*Sacr.* 20–44). The allegory was used by the cynic Antisthenes (contemporary of Plato) and Diogenes the Cynic.²⁸ Stoics expanded the Cynics' use of Homeric allegory in the interest of their philosophical system.

Using this allegorical method, Philo seeks out the hidden message beneath the surface of any particular text and tries to read back a new doctrine into the work of the past. In a similar way Plutarch allegorized the ancient Egyptian mythology giving it a new meaning.²⁹

But in some aspects of Jewish life Philo defends the literal interpretation of his tradition, as in the debate on circumcision or the Sabbath (*Mig.* 89–93; *Spec. leg.* 1.1–11). Though he acknowledges the symbolic meaning of these rituals, he insists on their literal interpretation.

EMPHASIS ON THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY

The key emphasis in Philo's philosophy is contrasting the spiritual life, understood as intellectual contemplation, with the mundane preoccupation with earthly concerns, either as an active life or as a search for pleasure. Philo

²⁷ Cicero, *ND* 1.38; Philodemus, *De pietate* 10.

²⁸ Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 8.20–21.

²⁹ Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*.

disdained the material world and the physical body (*Spec. leg.* 3.1–6). The body was for Philo as for Plato,³⁰ “an evil and a dead thing” (*LA* 3.72–74; *Gig.* 15), wicked by nature and a plotter against the soul (*LA* 3.69). But it was a necessary evil; hence, Philo does not advocate a complete abnegation from life. On the contrary he advocates fulfilling first the practical obligations toward men and the use of mundane possessions for the accomplishment of praiseworthy works (*Fug.* 23–28; *Plant.* 167–168). Similarly he considers pleasure indispensable and wealth useful, but for a virtuous man they are not a perfect good (*LA* 3.69–72).

Philo believed that men should steer themselves away from the physical aspect of things gradually. Some people, like philosophers, may succeed in focusing their minds on eternal realities. Philo believed that man’s final goal and ultimate bliss is in the “knowledge of the true and living God” (*Decal.* 81; *Abr.* 58; *Praem.* 14); “such knowledge is the boundary of happiness and blessedness” (*Det.* 86). To him, mystic vision allows our soul to see the Divine Logos (*Ebr.* 152) and achieve a union with God (*Deut.* 30:19–20; *Post.* 12). In a desire to validate the scripture as an inspired writing, he often compares it to prophetic ecstasy (*Her.* 69–70). His praise of the contemplative life of the monastic Therapeutae in Alexandria attests to his preference of *bios theoretikos* over *bios praktikos*. He adheres to the Platonic picture of the souls descending into the material realm and the view that only the souls of philosophers are able to come to the surface and return to their realm in heaven (*Gig.* 12–15). Philo adopted the Platonic concept of the soul with its tripartite division. The rational part of the soul, however, is breathed into man as a part of God’s substance. Philo speaks figuratively that, though we are alive, our soul is dead, buried in our body. When we die, our soul lives, released from the evil and dead body to which it is bound (*Op.* 67–69; *LA* 1.108).

PHILOSOPHY AND WISDOM: A PATH TO ETHICAL LIFE

Philo differentiated between philosophy and wisdom.³¹ To him philosophy is “the greatest good thing to men” (*Op.* 53–54), which they acquired because of a gift of reason from God (*Op.* 77). It is a devotion to wisdom, and a way to acquire the highest knowledge, “an attentive study of wisdom.” Wisdom, in turn, is “the knowledge of all divine and human things and of the respective causes of them” that is, according to Philo, contained in the Torah (*Congr.* 79). Hence, it follows that Moses, as the author of the Torah, “had reached the very summit of philosophy” and “had learnt from the oracles of God the most numerous and important of the principles of nature” (*Op.* 8). Moses was also the interpreter of nature (*Her.* 213). By saying this, Philo wanted to indicate that

³⁰ Plato, *Republic* 585b; *Timaeus* 86b; *Soph.* 228.

³¹ *Leg.* I.22; *SVF*, II.36; Plutarch, *Epitome*, I.13.

human wisdom has two origins: one is divine, the other is natural (*Her.* 182). Moreover, Mosaic Law is not inconsistent with nature. A single law, the Logos of nature, governs the entire world (*Jos.* 28–31), and its law is imprinted on the human mind (*Prob.* 46–47). Because of this, we have a conscience that affects even wicked persons (*QG* 4.62).

Wisdom is a consummated philosophy and, as such, has to be in agreement with the principles of nature (*Mos.* 2.48; *Abr.* 16; *Op.* 143; *Spec. leg.* 2.13; 3.46–47, 112, 137; *Virt.* 18). The study of philosophy has as its end “life in accordance with nature” and following the “path of right reason” (*Mig.* 128). Philosophy prepares us to lead a moral life, that is, “to live in conformity with nature” (*Prob.* 160). From this follows that life in accordance with nature hastens us toward virtues (*Mos.* 2.181; *Abr.* 60; *Spec. leg.* 1.155), and an unjust man is the one “who transgresses the ordinances of nature” (*Spec. leg.* 4.204; cf. *Decal.* 132; *Virt.* 131–132; *Plant.* 49; *Ebr.* 142; *Agr.* 66).

Thus, Philo does not discount human reason but contrasts only the true doctrine, which is trust in God, with uncertain, plausible, and unreliable reasoning (*LA* 3.228–229).

PHILO’S ETHICAL DOCTRINE

Philo’s ethical doctrine is Stoic in its essence and includes active effort to achieve virtue, the model of a sage to be followed, and practical advice concerning the achievement of the proper right reason and a proper emotional state of rational emotions (*eupatheia*).

To Philo, man is basically passive, and it is God who sows noble qualities in the soul; thus, we are instruments of God (*LA* 2.31–32; *Cher.* 127–128). Still, man is the only creature endowed with freedom to act, though his freedom is limited by the constitution of his mind. As such, he is responsible for his action and “very properly receives blame for the offences which he designedly commits.” This is so because he received a faculty of voluntary motion and is free from the dominion of necessity (*Deus* 47–48).

Philo advocates the practice of virtue in both the divine and the human spheres. Lovers only of God and lovers only of men are both incomplete in virtue. Philo advocates a middle, harmonious way (*Decal.* 106–110; *Spec. leg.* 4.102). He differentiates four virtues: wisdom, self-control, courage, and justice (*LA* 1.63–64).

Human dispositions Philo divides into three groups: the best is given the vision of God; the next has a vision on the right, that is, the Beneficent or Creative Power whose name is God; and the third has a vision on the left, that is, the Ruling Power called Lord (*Abr.* 119–130). Felicity is achieved in the culmination of three values: the spiritual, the corporeal, and the external (*QG* 3.16).

Philo adopts the Stoic wise man as a model for human behavior. Such a wise man should imitate God, who is impassible (*apathēs*); hence, the sage should

achieve a state of *apatheia*, that is, he should be free of irrational emotions (passions), pleasure, desire, sorrow, and fear, and he should replace them by rational or well-reasoned emotions (*eupatheia*), joy, will, compunction, and caution. In such a state of *eupatheia*, the sage achieves a serene, stable, and joyful disposition in which he is directed by reason in his decisions (*QG* 2.57; *Abr.* 201–204; *Fug.* 166–167; *Mig.* 67). But at the same time Philo claims that the needs of the body should not be neglected and he rejects the other extreme, that is, the practice of austerities. Everything should be governed by reason, self-control, and moderation. Joy and pleasure do not have intrinsic values, but are by-products of virtue and characterize the sage (*Fug.* 25–34; *Det.* 124–125; *LA* 80).

PHILO'S MYSTICISM AND TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

Mysticism is a doctrine that maintains that one can gain knowledge of reality that is not accessible to sense perception or to reason. It is usually associated with some mental and physical training, and in the theistic version it involves a sensation of closeness to or unity with God experienced as temporal and spatial transcendence.

According to Philo, man's highest union with God is limited to God's manifestation as the Logos. It is similar to a later doctrine of intellectual contact of our human intellect with the transcendent intellect developed by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Ibn Rushd and different from the Plotinian doctrine of the absorption into the ineffable one.³²

The notion of the utter transcendence of the First Principle probably goes back as far as Anaximander, who postulated the Indefinite (ἄπειρον) as this Principle (ἀρχή) and could be found in Plato's concept of the Good,³³ but the formulation is accredited to Speusippus, the successor of Plato in the Academy.³⁴ Philo's biblical tradition in which one could not name or describe God was the major factor in accepting the Greek Platonic concepts and emphasis on God's transcendence. But this position is alien to biblical and rabbinical understanding. In the Bible, God is represented in a "material" and "physical" way. Philosophically, however, Philo differentiated between the existence of God, which could be demonstrated, and the nature of God, which humans are not able to cognize. God's essence is beyond any human experience or cognition, therefore it can be described only by stating what God is not (*via negativa*) or by depriving him of any attribute of sensible objects and putting God beyond any attribute applicable to a sensible world (*via eminentiae*) because God alone is a being whose existence is his essence (*Det.* 160).

³² Plotinus, *Enneads* VI.9.11.

³³ Plato, *Republic* 509b.

³⁴ Speusippus, frag. 14, Lang.

Philo states in many places that God's essence is one and single; he does not belong to any class, nor is there in God any distinction of genus and species. Therefore, we cannot say anything about his qualities, "For God is not only devoid of peculiar qualities, but he is likewise not of the form of man" (*LA* 1.36); he "is free from distinctive qualities" (*LA* 1.51; 3.36; *Deus* 55). Strictly speaking, we cannot make any positive or negative statements about God (*LA* 3.206).

Moreover, because the essence of God is single, its property must therefore be one, which Philo denotes as acting: "Now it is an especial attribute of God to create, and this faculty it is impious to ascribe to any created being" (*Cher.* 77). The expression of this act of God, which is at the same time his thinking, is his Logos (*Prov.* 1.7; *Sacr.* 65; *Mos.* 1.283).

Though God is hidden, his reality is made manifest by the Logos that is God's image (*Somn.* 1.239; *Conf.* 147-148) and by the sensible universe, which in turn is the image of the Logos, which is "the archetypal model, the idea of ideas" (*Op.* 25).

Because of this, we can perceive God's existence, though we cannot fathom his essence. But there are degrees and levels to our cognizance of God. Those at the summit and the highest level may grasp the unity of the powers of God, at the lower level, people recognize the Logos as the Regent Power; and those still at the lowest level, immersed in the sensible world, are unable to perceive the intelligible reality (*Fug.* 94; *Abr.* 124-125). Steps in mystic experience involve a realization of human nothingness, a realization that the one who acts is God alone, and the abandonment of our sense of perception (*Her.* 69-71; *Plant.* 64; *Conf.* 95; *Ebr.* 152). A mystic state will produce a sensation of tranquillity and stability; it appears suddenly and is described as a sober intoxication (*Gig.* 49; *Sacr.* 78; *Somn.* 1.71; *Op.* 70-71).

SOURCE OF INTUITION OF THE INFINITE REALITY

According to Philo, the highest knowledge man may have is the knowledge of infinite reality, which is accessible not by the normal senses but by unmediated intuition of divinity. Humans were endowed with the mind, that is, ability to reason and the outward senses. We received the first in order that we might consider the things that are discernible only by the intellect, the end of which is truth, and the second for the perception of visible things, the end of which is opinion. Opinions, based on probability, are unstable and thus untrustworthy. It is by this divine gift that men are able to come to a conclusion about the existence of the divinity. They can do it in two ways: one is the apprehension of God through contemplation of his creation and forming a "conjectural conception of the Creator by a probable train of reasoning" (*Praem.* 43). In this process, the soul may climb the ladder to perfection by using natural means (i.e., natural dispositions), instruction (i.e., being educated to virtue), or by meditation. The other is a direct apprehension by being instructed by God

himself when the mind elevates itself above the physical world and perceives the uncreated One through a clear vision (*Praem.* 28–30, 40–66; *LA* 97–103). This vision is accessible to the “purified mind,” to which God appears as One. To the mind uninitiated in the mysteries, unable to apprehend God alone by himself, but only through his actions, God appears as a triad constituted by him and his two powers, Creative and Royal (*Abr.* 97–103). Such a direct vision of God is not dependent on revelation but is possible because we have an impression of God in our mind, which is nothing but a tiny fragment of the Logos pervading the whole universe, not separated from its source, but only extended (*Det.* 90; *Gig.* 27; *LA* 1.37; *Mut.* 223; *Spec. leg.* 4.123). And we receive this portion of the Divine Mind at birth being endowed with a mind that makes us resemble God (*Op.* 65–69).

At birth two powers enter every soul, the salutary (Beneficent) and the destructive (Unbounded). The world is created through these same powers. The creation is accomplished when “the salutary and beneficent (power) brings to an end the unbounded and destructive nature.” Similarly, one or the other power may prevail in humans, but when the salutary power “brings to an end the unbounded and destructive nature,” humans achieve immortality. Thus, both the world and humans are a mixture of these powers, and the prevailing one has the moral determination, for the souls of foolish men have the unbounded and destructive power, but the prudent and noble [soul] receives the powerful and salutary power (*QE* 1.23).

Philo evidently analyzes these two powers on two levels. One is the divine level in which the Unlimited or the Unbounded is a representation of God’s infinite and immeasurable goodness and creativity. The Logos keeps it in balance through the Limit. The other level is the human one in which the Unlimited or the Unbounded represents destruction and everything morally abhorrent. Human reason is able, however, to maintain in it some kind of balance.

This mind, divine and immortal, is an additional and differentiating part of the human soul, which animates man just like the souls of animals that are devoid of mind. The notion of God’s existence is thus imprinted in our mind, which needs only some illumination to have a direct vision of God (*Abr.* 79–80; *Det.* 86–87; *LA* 1.38). We can arrive at it through the dialectical reasoning as apprehension of the First Principle.

Philo differentiates two modes for perceiving God, an inferential mode and a direct mode without mediation (*Her.* 264). Thus this direct mode is not in any way a type of inspiration or inspired prophecy; it is unlike “inspiration,” when a “trance” or a “heaven-inflicted madness” seizes us and divine light sets as it happens “to the race of prophets” (*Her.* 265).

PHILO’S DOCTRINE OF CREATION

In antiquity most philosophers asserted that the world had a beginning and, having begun, was everlasting (according to Plato) or was subject to an eternal

sequence of cyclic generations and destructions (according to Heraclitus, Empedocles, the Stoics). Aristotle maintained that the Platonic view was untenable and asserted that the universe was eternal.³⁵ Some Platonists disagreed with the formulations of Platonic cosmogony and asserted that the world was really uncreated, but for the practical pedagogical reason, it could be presented as continually created and derived from the action of some principle on unorganized matter, the Indefinite Dyad.

Philo attempts to bridge the Greek “scientific” or rational philosophy with the strictly mythical ideology of the Hebrew scriptures. As a basis for the “scientific” approach, he uses the worldview presented by Plato in *Timaeus*, which remained influential in Hellenistic times. The characteristic feature of the Greek scientific approach is the biological interpretation of the physical world in anthropocentric terms, in terms of purpose and function that may apply to biological and psychological realities but may not be applied to the physical world. Moreover, Philo operates often on two levels: the level of mythical Hebraic religious tradition and the level of philosophical speculation in the Greek tradition. Nevertheless, Philo attempts to harmonize the Mosaic and Platonic accounts of the generation of the world by interpreting the biblical story using Greek scientific categories and concepts. He elaborates a religious-philosophical worldview that became the foundation for the future Christian doctrine.

Philo’s doctrine of creation is intertwined with his doctrine of God, and it answers two crucial questions: Was the world created *ex nihilo* or from primordial matter? Was creation a temporal act, or is it an eternal process?

Philo’s Model of Creation

Though Philo’s model of creation comes from Plato’s *Timaeus*, the direct agent of creation is not God himself (described in Plato as Demiurge, Maker, Artificer), but the Logos. Philo believes that the Logos is “the man of God” (*Conf.* 41) or “the shadow” of God that was used as an instrument and a pattern of all creation (*LA* 3.96).

The Logos converted unqualified, unshaped preexistent matter, which Philo describes as “destitute of arrangement, of quality, of animation, of distinctive character and full of disorder and confusion,” (*Op.* 22) into four primordial elements, “for it was not lawful for the all-wise and all-blessed God to touch materials which were all misshapen and confused” (*LA* 1.329).

According to Philo, Moses anticipated Plato by teaching that water, darkness, and chaos existed before the world came into being (*Op.* 22). Moses, having reached the philosophy summit, recognized that there are two fundamental principles of being: one, “an active cause, the intellect of the universe”; the

³⁵ Aristotle, *De Coelo* I.1079.

other, passive, “inanimate and incapable of motion by any intrinsic power of its own” (*Op.* 8–9), matter that is lifeless and motionless. But Philo is ambiguous in such statements as these: “God, who created all things, not only brought them all to light, but he has even created what before had no existence, not only being their maker, but also their founder” (*Somn.* 1.76; *Op.* 81; *LA* 3.10). It seems that Philo does not refer here to God’s creation of the visible world *ex nihilo* but to his creation of the intelligible Forms before the formation of the sensible world (*Spec. leg.* 1.328).

Philo reasons that by analogy to the biblical version of the creation of man in the image of God, so the visible world as such must have been created in the image of its archetype present in the mind of God. “It is manifest also, that that archetypal seal, which we call that world which is perceptible only to the intellect, must itself be the archetypal model, the Idea of Ideas, the Logos of God” (*Op.* 25). In his doctrine of God, Philo interprets the Logos, which is the Divine Mind as the Form of Forms (Platonic), the Idea of Ideas or the sum total of Forms or Ideas (*Det.* 75–76). The Logos is an indestructible Form of wisdom. Interpreting the garment of the high priest (Exod. 28:34, 36), Philo states: “But the seal is an Idea of Ideas, according to which God fashioned the world, being an incorporeal Idea, comprehensible only by the intellect” (*Mig.* 103).

The invisible intelligible and incorporeal world, which was used by the Logos as a model for creation or, rather, formation of the visible world from the (preexisting) unformed matter, was created in the mind of God; the world, perceptible by the external senses, was made by the Logos on the model of it (*Op.* 36). Describing Moses’ account of the creation of man, Philo states also that Moses calls the invisible Divine Logos the Image of God (*Op.* 24; 31; *LA* 1.9). Forms, though inapprehensible in essence, leave an impress and a copy and procure qualities and shapes to shapeless things and unorganized matter. Mind can grasp the Forms by longing for wisdom. This desire for wisdom, which is continuous and incessant in humans, fills us “with famous and most beautiful doctrines” (*Spec. leg.* 1.45–50).

Creation thus took place from preexistent shapeless matter (Plato’s Receptacle), which is “the nurse of all becoming and change,”³⁶ and for this creation God used the Forms that are his powers (*Spec. leg.* 1.327–329). This may seem a controversial point whether the primordial matter was preexistent or was created *ex nihilo*. Philo’s view is not clearly stated, and there are seemingly contradictory statements. In some places Philo states, “for as nothing is generated out of nothing, so neither can anything which exists be destroyed as to become non-existence” (*Aet.* 5–6). It seems that Philo talks about beings made of elements that become dissolved back again into elements (*Spec. leg.* 1.266).

³⁶ Plato, *Timaeus* 49–51.

The resolution of this seeming controversy is to be found in Philo's theory of eternal creation, which is described next in connection with the Logos as the agent of creation. Philo, being a strict monist, could not accept the existence of independent and eternal preexistent matter (however disorganized and chaotic) as Plato did.

Eternal Creation

Philo denies the Aristotelian conclusion coming, according to him, from the superficial observation that the world existed from eternity, independent of any creative act (*Op.* 7). He elaborates instead his theory of the eternal creation (*Prov.* I.6–9), as did Proclus (410–485 C.E.) much later in interpreting Plato.³⁷ Proclus brilliantly demonstrated that even in the theistic system the world, though generated, must be eternal, because the “world is always fabricated ... is always becoming to be.”³⁸ Proclus believed, as did Philo, that the corporeal world is always coming into existence but never possesses real being.³⁹

According to Philo, God did not begin to create the world at a certain moment, but he is “eternally applying himself to its creation” (*Prov.* I.7; *Op.* 7; *Aet.* 83–84). For God is indirectly the creator of time (*Deus* 31–32). Philo contends that God thinks simultaneously with his acting or creating; while he speaks (Logos), he creates (deed), and thus his Logos is his deed (*Sacr.* 65; *Mos.* I.283).

Any description of creation in temporal terms, for example, by Moses, is not to be taken literally. It is, rather, an accommodation to the biblical language (*Op.* 19; *Mut.* 27; *LA* 2.9–13):

Thus ever thinking he [God] creates, and furnishes to sensible things the principle of their existence, so that both should exist together: the ever-creating Divine Mind and the sense-perceptible things to which beginning of being is given. (*Prov.* I.7)

Philo postulates a crucial modification to the Platonic doctrine of the Forms, namely that God himself eternally creates the intelligible world of Ideas as his thoughts. The intelligible Forms are thus the principle of existence to the sensible things that are given their existence through them. This simply means in mystical terms that nothing exists or acts except God. On this ideal model,

³⁷ Proclus, *Commentaire sur le Timée. Traduction et notes*, par A. J. Festugière, vols. 1–5 (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1966–1968), vol. 2, p. 290, 3–25.

³⁸ In *Defense of the Timaeus of Plato against Objections Made to It by Aristotle*, in *Fragments of the Lost Writings of Proclus*, translated from the Greek by Thomas Taylor (Lawrence, KS: Selene Books, 1987), p. 4.

³⁹ *Arguments in Proof of the Eternity of the World*, in Taylor, *Fragments*, pp. 35–107. Proclus's main argument was that if God did not always make the world, he would be an imperfect Demiurge indigent of time. It is amazing that these arguments were never considered later by Christian philosophers who always argued instead for the biblical scheme of creation.

God then orders and shapes the formless matter through the agency of his Logos (*Her.* 134, 140) into the objects of the sensible world (*Op.* 19).

Philo claims a scriptural support for these metaphysics, saying that the creation of the world was after the pattern of an intelligible world (*Gen.* 1:17), which served as its model. During the first day, God created Ideas or Forms of heaven, earth, air (= darkness), empty space (= abyss), water, *pneuma* (= mind), light, and the intelligible pattern of the sun and the stars (*Op.* 29). There are, however, differences between Philo and Plato: according to Plato, there is no Form of space (χώρα). In Plato, space is not apprehended by reason; rather, it had its own special status in the world. Also *pneuma* as a Form of soul does not exist in the system of Plato.

Plato designates this primordial unorganized state of matter a self-existing Receptacle; it is most stable and a permanent constituent that must be called always the same, because it never departs from its own character.⁴⁰ Philo, being a strict monist, could not allow even for a self-existing void, so he makes its pattern an eternal idea in the divine mind.

Before Philo, there was no explicit theory of creation *ex nihilo* ever postulated in Jewish or Greek traditions. Both Philo and Plato do not explain how the reflections (εἰδωλα) of Forms are made in the world of senses. They do not attribute them to God or the Demiurge because it would be contrary to their conception of God as “good” and “desiring that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself.”⁴¹ God could not create the copies of the Forms that should be “disordered.” It seems then that the primordial unorganized matter was spontaneously produced on the pattern of the Ideas. The Logos would shape the elements from this preexistent matter into heavy (or dense) and light (or rare) elements, which were differentiated properly into water and earth, and air and fire (*Her.* 134–140; 143). As in Plato certain geometrical descriptions characterize Philo’s elements. Fire was characterized by a pyramid, air by an octahedron, water by an icosahedron, and earth by a cube (*QG* 3.49). In Plato’s theory too, one can envision a sort of automatic reflection of the Forms in the Receptacle due to the properties of Forms. God could not, according to Philo’s philosophy, create the preexistent matter (*Her.* 160).

Logically, God is for Philo indirectly the source of preexistent matter, but Philo does not ascribe to God even the shaping of matter directly. In fact, this unorganized matter never existed because it was simultaneously ordered into organized matter – the four elements from which the world is made.

DOCTRINE OF MIRACLES: NATURALISM AND COMPREHENSION

Closely connected with Philo’s doctrine of creation is his doctrine of miracles. His favorite statement is that “everything is possible with God.” This, however,

⁴⁰ Plato, *Timaeus* 50.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

does not mean that God can act outside the natural order of things or his own nature. Philo emphasizes that God's miraculous works are within the realm of the natural order. Doing this, he extends the natural order to encompass the biblical miracles and tries to explain them by their coincidence with natural events – for example, the miracle at the Red Sea, which he characterizes as a “mighty work of nature” (*Mos.* 1.165), or the plague of darkness as a total eclipse (*Mos.* 1.123). The story of Balaam he sees as an allegorical one (*Cher.* 32–35). This was the tendency inherited from some Stoics who attempted to explain miracles of divination as events preordered in nature by the divine power pervading it.⁴² Similarly, Philo considers the biblical miracles as a part of the eternal pattern of the Logos acting in nature. Augustine considers miracles as implanted in the destiny of the cosmos since the time of its creation.⁴³ Philo and rabbinic literature emphasize the miraculous and marvelous character of nature itself. All natural things are wonderful but are “despised by us by reason of our familiarity with them,” and all things with which we are unaccustomed make an impression on us “for the love of novelty” (*Mos.* 1.2–213). Even in modern Jewish teaching there is a tendency to explain the miraculous by the natural. Thus, one can find a certain discrepancy in Philo's writing; on one hand, Philo is rationalist and naturalist in the spirit of Greek philosophical tradition; on the other, he follows popular religion to preserve the biblical tradition.

Philo emphasizes, however, that we are limited in our human capabilities to “comprehend everything” about the physical world, and it is better to “suspend our judgment” than to err (*Ebr.* 170). But we are able to comprehend things by comparing them with their opposites and thus arriving at their true nature. The same applies to what is virtue and to what is vice, and to what is just and good and to what is unjust and bad (*Ebr.* 187).

The same reasoning he extends to differences between national customs and ancient laws, which vary according to countries, nations, cities, different villages, and even private houses and instruction received by people from childhood:

For whatever this man defines as such, someone else, who from his childhood has learnt a contrary lesson, will be sure to deny. (*Ebr.* 197)

PHILO'S DOCTRINE OF THE LOGOS

The pivotal and the most developed doctrine in Philo's writings, on which hinges his entire philosophical system, is his doctrine of the Logos. By developing this doctrine he fused Greek philosophical concepts with Hebrew religious thought and provided the foundation for Christianity, first in the development of the Messianist/“Christian” Pauline myth and speculations of John, and later in the Hellenistic Christian Logos and Gnostic doctrines of the second century.

⁴² Cicero, *ND* III.13–15.

⁴³ Augustine, *De Trinitate* 3.8.

Christian writers used the Philonic Logos and its epiphanies in the scripture as the model for their doctrine of the Father-Son relationship. All other doctrines of Philo hinge on his interpretation of divine existence and action.

The Utterance of God

Following the Jewish mythical tradition, Philo represents the Logos as the utterance of God found in the Jewish scripture of the Old Testament because God's words do not differ from his actions. There are three quotes relevant in this context. When discussing the question why God created the world in six days, Philo explains that God did not need time for it, because he created things at once; however, the created things needed rearrangement in an orderly way: God creates everything at once "not merely by uttering a command but by even thinking of it." In *De somniis*,⁴⁴ Philo clearly states that God's "words do not differ from his actions." And finally in *De Sacrificiis*,⁴⁵ Philo explains a passage from Deuteronomy 5:31 in which God elevated Moses above his people by a word. God "both created the universe, and raised a perfect man from the things of earth up to himself by the same word." And this was done in accordance with the Old Testament, where God acts "by means of the word of the Cause of all things by whom the whole world was made."⁴⁶

The Divine Mind

Philo accepted the Platonic intelligible Forms. Forms exist forever, though the impressions they make may perish with the substance of which they were made.⁴⁷ They are not, however, beings existing separately; rather, they exist in the mind of God as his thoughts and powers. Philo explicitly identifies Forms with God's powers. Those powers are his glory, and Philo portrayed God as explaining to Moses that these powers are "invisible and intelligible" as God is, and some among people "call them Form."⁴⁸

Philo interpreted the Logos, which is the divine Mind, as the Form of Forms, the Idea of Ideas, or the sum total of Forms or Ideas.⁴⁹ The Logos is an indestructible Form of wisdom comprehensible only by the intellect.⁵⁰

Philo reasoned that by analogy to the biblical version of the creation of man in the image of God, so the visible world as such must have been created in the image of its archetype present in the mind of God.⁵¹ The invisible intelligible

⁴⁴ *Somn.* 1.182.

⁴⁵ *Sacr.* 8.

⁴⁶ *Deut.* 34:5.

⁴⁷ *Det.* 75-77; *Mut.* 80, 122, 146; *Cher.* 51.

⁴⁸ *Spec. leg.* 1.45-50.

⁴⁹ *Det.* 75-76.

⁵⁰ *Mig.* 103.

⁵¹ *Op.* 25.

world that was used by the Logos as an archetypal model for creation or rather the formation of the visible world from the (preexisting) unformed matter was created in the mind of God.⁵²

Describing Moses' account of the creation of man, Philo stated: "And the invisible divine Logos, he [Moses] calls the Image of God";⁵³ also, "shadow of God is his Logos, which he used as like an instrument when he was making the world."⁵⁴ Forms, though inapprehensible in essence, leave an impress and a copy and procure qualities and shapes to shapeless things, unorganized matter. Mind can grasp the Forms by longing for wisdom.⁵⁵

Creation thus took place from the preexistent shapeless and preelemental matter (Plato's Receptacle), which is "the nurse of all becoming and change,"⁵⁶ and for this creation, God used the Forms which are his powers.⁵⁷

Agent of Creation

Philo believed that the Logos is "the man of God"⁵⁸ or "the shadow of God" that was used as an instrument of creation and a pattern of all creation.⁵⁹

The role of the Logos in creation was previously described in the section, "Philo's Doctrine of Creation."

Transcendent Power

The Logos that God begat eternally because it is a manifestation of God's thinking-acting⁶⁰ is an agent that unites two powers of the transcendent God. Philo relates that in an inspiration his own soul told him

in the one living and true God there were two supreme and primary powers, Goodness [or Creative Power = ποιητική δύναμις] and Authority [or Regent Power = βασιλική δύναμις]; and that by his Goodness he had created everything; and by his Authority he governed all that he had created; and that the third thing which was between the two ... was the Logos, for that it was owing to Logos that God was both a ruler and good.

And further Philo states that biblical cherubim are the symbols of the two powers of God, but the flaming sword (Gen. 3.24) is the symbol of the Logos.⁶¹

⁵² *Op.* 36.

⁵³ *Op.* 24; 31; *LA* 1.9.

⁵⁴ *LA* 3.96.

⁵⁵ *Spec. leg.* 1.45–50.

⁵⁶ Plato, *Timaeus* 49–51.

⁵⁷ *Spec. leg.* 1.327–329.

⁵⁸ *Conf.* 41.

⁵⁹ *LA* 3.96.

⁶⁰ *Provid.* 1.7; *Sacr.* 65; *Mos.* 1.283.

⁶¹ *Cher.* 1.27–28. Cf. *Sacr.* 59; *Abr.* 124–125; *Her.* 166; *QE* 2.68.

Philo's description of the Logos (the Mind of God) corresponds to the Greek concept of mind as hot and fiery.⁶² There are other powers of the Father and his Logos in addition to these two main powers, including *merciful* and *legislative*:

Perhaps we may say that the most ancient, and the strongest and the most excellent metropolis ... is the divine Logos.... But the other five, ebbing as it were colonies of that one, are the powers of Him who utters the Word, the chief of which is his creative power, according to which the Creator made the world with a word; the second is his kingly power, according to which he who has created rules over what is created; the third is his merciful power, in respect to which the creator pities and shows mercy towards his own work; the fourth is his legislative power by which he forbids what may not be done.⁶³

Also the Logos has an origin, but as God's thought it also has eternal generation. It exists before everything else, all of which are secondary products of God's thought, and therefore it is called the "first-born."

The Logos is thus more than a quality, power, or characteristic of God; it is an entity eternally generated as an extension, to which Philo ascribes many names and functions. The Logos is the first-begotten Son of the uncreated Father:

For the Father of the universe has caused him to spring up as the eldest son, whom, in another passage, he [Moses] calls the first-born; and he who is thus born, imitating the ways of his father, has formed such and such species, looking to his archetypal patterns.⁶⁴

This picture is somewhat confusing because we learn that, in the final analysis, the Creative Power is also identified with the Logos.

The Beneficent (Creative) and Regent (Authoritative) Powers are called God and Lord, respectively. Goodness is Boundless Power, Creative, God. The Regent Power is also Punitive Power and the Lord.⁶⁵ Creative Power, moreover, permeates the world; it is the power by which God made and ordered all things. Philo followed the ideas of the Stoics⁶⁶ that *nous* pervades every part of the universe as it does the soul in us. Therefore, Philo asserts that the aspect of God that transcends his powers (which we have to understand to be the Logos) cannot be conceived of in terms of place but as pure being, as that power of his by which he made and ordered all things and which is called God "enfolds the whole and passes through the parts of the universe."⁶⁷ According to Philo, the two powers of God are separated by God "himself standing above in the

⁶² Aëtius IV.3.3-11 (Stoics); IV.3.4 (Parmenides); IV.3.5 (Democritus); IV.3.6 (Heraclitus); IV.3.7 (Leucippus); IV.3.11 (Epicurus). In *Doxographi graeci*; SVF, III.305; II.446.

⁶³ *Fug.* 94-95.

⁶⁴ *Conf.* 63.

⁶⁵ *Her.* 166.

⁶⁶ *DL* 7.138-139.

⁶⁷ *Conf.* 136-137.

midst of them ... the senior powers of the Existent.”⁶⁸ Referring to Genesis 18:2, Philo claims that God and his two Powers are in reality one. To the human mind they appear as a Triad with God above the powers that belong to him.⁶⁹

At birth two powers enter every soul, the salutary (Beneficent) and the destructive (Unbounded). The world is created through these same powers. The creation is accomplished when “the salutary and beneficent (power) brings to an end the unbounded and destructive nature.” Similarly, one or the other power may prevail in humans, but when the salutary power “brings to an end the unbounded and destructive nature,” humans achieve immortality. Thus, both the world and humans are a mixture of these powers, and the prevailing one has the moral determination.⁷⁰

Philo evidently analyzes these two powers on two levels. One is the divine level in which the Unlimited or the Unbound is a representation of God’s infinite and immeasurable goodness and creativity. The Logos keeps it in balance through the Limit. The other level is the human one where the Unlimited or the Unbounded represents destruction and everything morally abhorrent. Human reason is able, however, to maintain in it some kind of balance.

Philo obviously refers these powers to the Unlimited (ἄπειρον) and the Limit (πέρας) of Plato’s *Philebus* and Pythagorean tradition.⁷¹ Among the beings Plato differentiated are the Unlimited, the Limited, a third one that is a mixture of these two, and a fourth that is the cause of mixing. When the first two principles are combined in one unity, it is called a body (a component of the world or a human, and on the cosmic level the universe). The fourth principle is the cause (αἰτία), which is producing the mixture and everything that becomes from that mixture. The cause that produces order is reason and wisdom. If it acts on the cosmic level, it is the cosmic soul, and if it acts in humans, it is a human soul. The ideal life thus described by Plato, just as later by Philo, is the one governed by reason.

In Plato, these two principles or powers operate at the metaphysical, cosmic, and human levels. Philo considered those to be powers inherent in a transcendental God, and that God himself may be thought of as multiplicity in unity.

The Creative Power is logically prior to the Regent Power because it is conceptually older. Though the powers are of equal age, the creative is prior because one is king not of the nonexistent but of what has already come into being.⁷² These two powers thus delimit the bounds of heaven and the world. The Creative Power maintains things so they should not be dissolved; the

⁶⁸ *Her.* 166.

⁶⁹ *QG* 4.2.

⁷⁰ *QE* 1.23.

⁷¹ Plato, *Philebus* 23c–31a.

⁷² *QE* 2.62.

Regent Power arbitrates through the laws order and equality, which are the seeds of peace and perpetual survival.⁷³ The positive properties of God may be subdivided into these two polar forces; therefore, the expression of the One is the Logos, which constitutes the manifestation of God's thinking-acting.⁷⁴

According to Philo, these powers of the Logos can be grasped at various levels. People at the summit level grasp them as constituting an indivisible unity. At the two lower levels are, respectively, those who know the Logos as the Creative Power and, beneath them, those who know it as the Regent Power.⁷⁵ The next level down represents those limited to the sensible world and unable to perceive the intelligible realities.⁷⁶ At each successively lower level of divine knowledge the image of God's essence is increasingly more obscured.

Universal Bond

The Logos is the Bond holding together and administering the entire chain of creation binding all parts together. In humans, the soul does not permit separation of the parts of the body but holds them in integrity and harmony. Especially in the wise man, his mind preserves the virtues and keeps them in communion with the good will.⁷⁷ The Logos of God is a glue and a chain that fills all things with its essence.⁷⁸

Immanent Reason

The reasoning capability of the human mind is a portion of the all-pervading divine Logos.⁷⁹ Philo emphasizes that man "has received this one extraordinary gift, intellect, which is accustomed to comprehend the nature of all bodies and of all things at the same time."⁸⁰ Humanity resembles God in the sense of having free volition.⁸¹

This concept, that it is chiefly in intellect and free volition that humans differ from other life forms, has a long history, which can be traced to Anaxagoras and Aristotle.⁸² Philo called "men of God" those people who made God-inspired intellectual life their dominant issue. Such men "have entirely transcended the sensible sphere, and migrated to the intelligible world, and dwell there

⁷³ *QE* 2.64.

⁷⁴ *Provid.* 1.7; *Sacr.* 65; *Mos.* 1.283.

⁷⁵ *Fug.* 94–95; *Abr.* 124–125.

⁷⁶ *Gig.* 20.

⁷⁷ *Fug.* 112.

⁷⁸ *Her.* 188.

⁷⁹ *Deus* 47.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Deus* 48.

⁸² Aristotle, *De Anima* 429a4.16–18.

enrolled as citizens of the Commonwealth of Ideas, which are imperishable, and incorporeal ... those who are born of God are priests and prophets who have not thought fit to mix themselves up in the constitutions of this world.”⁸³ Philo wrote the following in reference to the Old Testament expression that God “breathed into” (equivalent of “inspired” or “gave life to”) inanimate things:

For there must be three things: that which breathes in is God, that which receives what is breathed in, and that which is breathed in. Now, that which breathes is God, that which receives what is breathed in is the mind, and that which is breathed in is the spirit. What then is collected from these three things? A union of the three takes place, through God extending the power, which proceeds from himself through the spirit, which is the middle term, as far as the subject.⁸⁴

Though the spirit is distributed among men and also fills the world, it is not diminished, nor is it injured by participating in humans as their understanding, their knowledge, or their wisdom.⁸⁵ The nature of the reasoning power in men is indivisible from the divine Logos, but “though they are indivisible themselves, they divide an innumerable multitude of other things.” Just as the divine Logos divided and distributed everything in nature (i.e., it gave qualities to undifferentiated, primordial matter), so the human mind by exertion of its intellect is able to divide everything and everybody into an infinite number of parts. And this is possible because it resembles the Logos of the Creator and Father of the universe.⁸⁶

Uninitiated minds are unable to comprehend the Existent by itself; they perceive it only through its actions. To them, God appears as a Triad, himself and his two Powers: Creative and Ruling. To the “purified soul,” however, God appears as One,⁸⁷ as one image of the living God, and others of the other two, as if they were shadows irradiated by it.⁸⁸

So the one category of enlightened people is able to comprehend God through a vision beyond the physical universe. It is as though they advanced on a heavenly ladder and conjectured the existence of God through an inference.⁸⁹ The other category comprehends him through himself, as light is seen by light. For God gave man such a perception “as should prove to him that God exists, and not to show him what God is.” Philo believed that even the *existence* of God “cannot possibly be contemplated by any other being; because, in fact, it is not possible for God to be comprehended by

⁸³ *Gig.* 61.

⁸⁴ *LA* 1.37.

⁸⁵ *Gig.* 27.

⁸⁶ *Her.* 234–236; *Det.* 90. Cf. *Gig.* 27; *LA* 1.37.

⁸⁷ *Abr.* 119–123.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Proem.* 40.

any being but himself.”⁹⁰ Philo adds, “Only men who have raised themselves upward from below, so as, through the contemplation of his works, to form a conjectural conception of the Creator by a probable train of reasoning”⁹¹ are holy and are his servants.

Next Philo explains how such men have an impression of God’s existence as revealed by God himself, by the similitude of the sun (Philo borrowed this analogy from Plato).⁹² As the light is seen in consequence of its own presence, so, “In the same manner God, being his own light, is perceived by himself alone, nothing and no other being co-operating with or assisting him, a being at all able to contribute to pure comprehension of his existence; But these men have arrived at the real truth, who form their ideas of God from God, of light from light.”⁹³

As Plato and Philo had done, Plotinus later used this image of the sun: “The illumination which is diffused from Him who remains immobile, is as light in the sun which illuminates everything else around.”⁹⁴ Philo differentiated two modes for perceiving God, an inferential mode and a direct mode without mediation: “As long therefore as our mind still shines around and hovers around, pouring as it were a noontide light into the whole soul, we, being masters of ourselves, are not possessed by any extraneous influence.”⁹⁵ This direct mode is not in any way a type of inspiration or inspired prophecy; it is unlike “inspiration” when a “trance” or a “heaven-inflicted madness” seizes us and divine light sets as it happens “to the race of prophets.”⁹⁶

Thus, the Logos, eternally created (begotten), is an expression of the immanent powers of God, and at the same time it emanates into everything in the world.

Immanent Mediator of the Physical Universe

In certain places in his writings, Philo accepted the Stoic theory of the immanent Logos as the power or law binding opposites in the universe, mediating between them, and directing the world. For example, Philo envisions that the world is suspended in a vacuum and asks, How is it that the world does not fall down since it is not held by any solid thing? Philo then

⁹⁰ *Proem.* 39–40.

⁹¹ *Proem.* 43.

⁹² Philo, *Mut.* 4–6; Plato, *Republic* 507c.

⁹³ *Proem.* 45–46.

⁹⁴ Plotino, *Enneadi*; Porfirio, *Vita di Plotino*, traduzione con testo greco a fronte, introduzione, note e bibliografia di Giuseppe Fraggin (Milano: Rusconi, 1992–1996); English translation: *The Enneads*, translated by Stephen MacKenna and abridged with introduction and notes by John Dillon (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), 5.1.6.

⁹⁵ *Her.* 264.

⁹⁶ *Her.* 265.

gives the answer: “The Logos binds fast all its parts.”⁹⁷ And the divine Logos produces harmony in the universe.⁹⁸

Philo saw God as only indirectly the Creator of the world: God is the author of the invisible, intelligible world that served as a model for the Logos. Philo says Moses called this archetypal heavenly power by various names: “the beginning, the image, and the sight of God.”⁹⁹ Following the views of Plato and the Stoics, Philo believed that “in all existing things there must be an active cause, and a passive subject; and that the active cause is the Logos of the universe.”¹⁰⁰

He gives the impression that he believed that the Logos functions as the Platonic “Soul of the World” does.¹⁰¹

The Angel of the Lord, Revealer of God

Philo describes the Logos as the revealer of God symbolized in the scripture by an angel of the Lord.¹⁰²

Referring to Genesis 31:13, Philo states: “We must understand this, that he [God] on that occasion took the place of an angel, as far as appearance went, without changing his own real nature.”¹⁰³ Philo claims that the angel who appeared to Hagar in Genesis 16:8 was “the Word [Logos] of God.”¹⁰⁴ The Logos is the firstborn and the eldest and chief of the angels.¹⁰⁵

According to Philo, man’s highest union with God is limited to the deity’s manifestation as the Logos. God’s transcendence prevents our having access to God’s essence. The notion of God’s transcendence could be found in Plato’s concept of the Good as One above the Being,¹⁰⁶ but the credit for the concept in Greek philosophy goes to Speusippus (408–339 B.C.E.), Plato’s successor as the head of the Academy.¹⁰⁷ The idea was also developed by Neopythagoreans, Eudorus of Alexandria (fl. 30 B.C.E.), and Moderatus of Gades (fl. second half

⁹⁷ *Plant.* 9–10. Cf. *Plant.* 7–10. Cf. *LA* 1.37; *Her.* 188; *Deus* 176; *Det.* 90; *Gig.* 27; *QE* 2.68, *Fug.* 110; *Op.* 143.

⁹⁸ A favorite word of the Stoics.

⁹⁹ *LA* 1.43.

¹⁰⁰ *Op.* II. 8–9.

¹⁰¹ *Aet.* 84.

¹⁰² *Somn.* 1.228–1.239; *Cher.* 1–3.

¹⁰³ *Somn.* 1.238.

¹⁰⁴ *Fug.* 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Conf.* 146–147.

¹⁰⁶ Plato, *Republic* 509b.

¹⁰⁷ Speusippus frag. 34, in Paul Lang, *De Speusippi Academici Scriptis. Accedunt Fragmenta* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965); Speusippo, *Frammenti*, edizione, traduzione e commenti a cura di Margherita Isnardi Parente (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1980); Leonardo Tarán, *Speusippus of Athens: A Critical Study with a Collection of the Related Texts and Commentary* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981).

of the first century C.E.). Eudorus claimed that the Pythagoreans held that the supreme principle, the One, existed above the principles of Monad and Dyad. Moderatus of Gades, in turn, taught the existence of three principles: the supreme principle, the One, identified with the Good; next, the active Logos, identified with the intelligible realm; and the third, the realm of the soul. Anaximander (d. ca. 546 B.C.E.) postulated *apeiron* (ἄπειρον), the Unlimited, as the first principle, not a natural substance, from which many worlds are becoming. The Neoplatonists postulated this first principle supranoeitic above a pair of the opposites, Monad representing Form and Dyad representing Matter.¹⁰⁸

Somewhat like that Neoplatonist doctrine, Philo emphatically insisted on a doctrine of God's transcendence, which held to a distinction between God's essence and God's existence, and which taught our complete inability of cognizing the former. This position is alien to biblical and rabbinical traditions. In the Bible, God is represented in a "material" and "physical" way: "God breathed into man's face both physically and morally."¹⁰⁹ And, "The mind is vivified by God, and the irrational part of the soul by the mind; for the mind is as it were a god to the irrational part of the soul, for which reason Moses did not hesitate to call it the god of Pharaoh (Exod. 7:1)."¹¹⁰ But Philo asserts that we may not know the exact nature of God, "for he has not displayed his nature to any one."¹¹¹

God's qualities are most generic, and there can be no distinction in him between genus and species because God "exists according to the indivisible unit."¹¹² God belongs to no class; he has properties, but they are not shared with others. His essence is, therefore, one and single. "Now there is an especial attribute of God to create, and this faculty it is impious to ascribe to any created being. But the special property of the created being is to suffer."¹¹³

God's essence, though concealed, is made manifest on two secondary levels. One is the level of the intelligible universe of the most ancient Logos, which is God's image.¹¹⁴ The second level is the level of the sensible universe, which is an image of the Logos.¹¹⁵

The essence of God remains forever undisclosed; only its effect, images, or shadows may be perceived. Because the essence of God is forever beyond any possibility of human experience or cognition, including the mystic experience of vision, the only attributes that may be applied to God in his supreme state are

¹⁰⁸ Simplicius, *In Phys.* 181.10 ff.

¹⁰⁹ *LA* 1.36, 39.

¹¹⁰ *LA* 1.40.

¹¹¹ *LA* 3.206; *LA* 3.26; *Deus* 53, 56.

¹¹² *Gig.* 52.

¹¹³ *Cher.* 77.

¹¹⁴ *Conf.* 147–148; *Somm.* 1.239.

¹¹⁵ *Op.* 25.

those of the *via negativa* or of the *via eminentiae*. But there is also a third way, which consists of depriving the object of knowledge of any sensible attribute:

For of men some are attached to the service of the soul, and others to that of the body; now the companions of the soul, being able to associate with incorporeal natures, appreciable only by the intellect, do not compare the living God to any species of created beings; but, dissociating it with any idea of distinctive qualities ... they, I say, are content with the bare conception of his existence, and do not attempt to invest him with any form.¹¹⁶

He is beyond being, like Plato's Good.¹¹⁷ It may be inferred, however, from the fact that God alone is (ὄντως ὄν = one that is), that his being is at an order altogether different from anything else:

God alone exists in essence ... he speaks of necessity about himself, saying, "I am that I am." (Exod. 3:14)¹¹⁸

The Firstborn Son of God

God governs the world and everything in it just as a king rules, but God governs not directly but through an appointed governor, who is his reason and his firstborn son,¹¹⁹ and who receives his charge as the lieutenant of the great king.¹²⁰

Logos is the firstborn son of God because he was born before all other angels and before anything else that was created.

Multinamed Archetype

Philo's Logos has many names: son of God, the firstborn Logos, the eldest of God's angels, the great archangel, the Authority, the name of God, and man according to God's image, and he who sees Israel.¹²¹

Making reference to Proverbs 8:22, Philo says that Logos is also called Wisdom.¹²² Earthly wisdom is also a copy of this Wisdom as an archetype. Moreover, terrestrial virtue of the human race is "a copy and representation of

¹¹⁶ *Deus* 55. Cf. Alcinous, *Did.* 185.14.

¹¹⁷ Plato, *Republic* 509a, b.

¹¹⁸ *Det.* 160.

¹¹⁹ *Agr.* 51.

¹²⁰ Exod. 23:20.

¹²¹ *Conf.* 146. Just like the Logos-Zeus of the Stoics (*SVF*, I, 537; Diogenes Laertius 7.135; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 9.2.31); or Isis (Plutarch, *De Iside et de Osiride*, edited with an introduction, translation and commentary by J. Gwynn Griffiths [Cardiff: University of Wales, 1970], 372e); Apuleius of Madauros, *The Isis-Book: Metamorphoses, Book XI*, edited with an introduction, translation, and commentary by J. Gwynn Griffiths (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), XI.5.

¹²² *Ebr.* 31; *LA* 1.43, 45–46.

the heavenly,”¹²³ which is “the Logos of God, the first beginning of all things, the original species or the archetypal idea, the first measure of the universe.”¹²⁴

Soul-Nourishing Manna

God sends “the stream” from his Wisdom, which irrigates God-loving souls; consequently they become filled with “manna.” Manna is described by Philo as a “generic thing” coming from God. It does not come from God directly, however, because “the most generic is God, and next is the Logos of God, the other things subsist in Word [Logos] only.”¹²⁵ According to Philo, Moses called manna “the most ancient Logos of God.”¹²⁶ For God

nourishes us with his own Word [Logos], which is the most universal of all things ... ; for the Logos of God is over all the world, and is the most ancient, and the most universal of all things that are created.¹²⁷

Next Philo explains that the soul of the more perfect man is nourished by the whole Word (Logos) but others must be content if they are nourished by the part of it.¹²⁸

This Wisdom as the Daughter of God is “a true-born and ever virgin daughter” and “has obtained a nature intact and undefiled both because of her own propriety and the dignity of him who begot her.” Having identified the Logos with Wisdom, Philo runs into a grammatical problem: in the Greek language “wisdom” (*sophia*) is feminine and “word” (*logos*) is masculine; moreover, Philo saw Wisdom’s function as masculine. So he explained that Wisdom’s *name* is feminine, but her *nature* is masculine:

For that which comes after God, even if it were the most venerable of all other things, holds second place, and was called feminine in contrast to the Creator of the universe, who is masculine, and, in accordance with its resemblance, to everything else.¹²⁹

Intermediary Power, Messenger, and Suppliant for Men

The fundamental doctrine propounded by Philo is that of the Logos as an intermediary power, a messenger and mediator between God and the world:

To his chief messenger and most venerable Logos, the Father who engendered the universe has granted the singular gift, to stand between and separate the creature from the Creator. This same Logos is both suppliant of ever anxiety-ridden mortality

¹²³ *LA* 1.43, 45–46. Cf. *Ebr.* 92; *Mut.* 125; *Somn.* 2.254; *QG* 3.40.

¹²⁴ *QG* 1.4.

¹²⁵ *LA* 2.86.

¹²⁶ *Det.* 118.

¹²⁷ *LA* 3.175–176.

¹²⁸ *Det.* 115–117, 160; *Her.* 191; *Fug.* 138.

¹²⁹ *Fug.* 50–52.

before the immortal and ambassador of the ruler to the subject.... God is the cause, not the instrument, and what was born was created indeed through the agency of some instrument, but was by all means called into existence by the great first cause.¹³⁰

And Logos is the suppliant for men, God's ambassador sent to men:

And this same Logos is continually a suppliant to the immortal God on behalf of the mortal race, which is exposed to affliction and misery; and is also the ambassador, sent by the Ruler of all, to the subject race.¹³¹

When speaking of the high priest, Philo describes the Logos as God's Son, a perfect being procuring forgiveness of sins and supplying unlimited blessings.¹³²

Philo transformed the Stoic impersonal and immanent Logos into a being who was neither eternal like God nor created like creatures, but begotten from eternity. This being was a mediator giving hope to men and who "was sent down to earth." God, according to Philo, sends "the stream of his own wisdom" to men "and causes the changed soul to drink of unchangeable health; for the abrupt rock is the wisdom of God, which being both sublime and the first of things he quarried out of his own powers." After the souls are watered, they are filled with the manna, which "is called something which is the primary genus of everything. But the most universal of all things is God; and in the second place is the Logos of God."¹³³ Through the Logos of God, men learn all kinds of instruction and everlasting wisdom.¹³⁴ The Logos is the "cupbearer (οἰνοχόος) of God ... being itself in an unmixed state, the pure delight and sweetness, and pouring forth and joy, and ambrosial medicine of pleasure and happiness."¹³⁵ This wisdom was represented by the tabernacle of the Old Testament, which was "a thing made after the model and in imitation of Wisdom" and "sent down to earth" in the midst of our impurity in order that we may have something whereby we may be purified, washing off and cleansing all those things which dirty and defile our miserable life, full of all evil reputation as it is."¹³⁶ Thus, God sows and implants terrestrial virtue in the human race, which is an imitation and representation of the heavenly virtue.¹³⁷

Source of Wisdom Sent Down to Earth as Illumination of Humans

The Logos is thus an intermediary between men and God, but it can be interpreted as a direct intermediary or as acting through Wisdom sent to

¹³⁰ *Cher.* 125.

¹³¹ *Her.* 205–206.

¹³² *Mos.* 2.134.

¹³³ *LA* 2.86.

¹³⁴ *Fug.* 127–129.

¹³⁵ *Son.* II.249.

¹³⁶ *Her.* 112–113.

¹³⁷ *LA* 1.45.

humans. For in another fragment Philo seems to make the Logos a source of wisdom and illuminating power among humans, which later was described by Numenius as the Third God and among Christians as the Holy Spirit:

Those also who have inquired what it is that nourishes the soul ..., learnt at last and found that it was the Word of God [Logos] and the divine reason.... This is the heavenly nourishment which the holy scripture indicates, saying, in the character of the cause of all things, "Behold I rain upon you bread from heaven."¹³⁸

Second "God"

In three passages, Philo describes the Logos even as God. In the first two, Philo, commenting on Genesis 22:16, explains why God could only swear by himself:

He alone has any knowledge concerning his actions; ... which is not possible for anyone else to do.... For no man can rightly swear by himself, because he is not able to have any certain knowledge respecting his own nature, but we must be content if we are able to understand even his name, that is to say his Logos, which is the interpreter of his will. For that must be God to us imperfect beings, but the first mentioned, or true God is so only to wise and perfect man.¹³⁹

What then ought we to say? There is one true God only: but they who are called gods, by an abuse of language, are numerous, on which account the holy scripture on the present occasion indicates that it is the true God that is meant by the use of the article, the expression being "I am the God [*ho theos*]"; but when the word is used incorrectly, it is put without the article, the expression being, "He who was seen by thee in the place, not of the God [*ton theon*], but simply of God [*theon*]"; and what he here calls God is his most ancient Logos, not having any superstitious regard to the position of the names, but only proposing one end to himself, namely to give a true account of the matter; for in other passages the sacred historian, when he considered whether there really was any name belonging to the living God, showed that he knew that there was none properly belonging to him, but that whatever appellation any one may give him, will be an abuse of terms; for the living God is not of a nature to be described, but only to be.¹⁴⁰

Commenting on Genesis 9:6, Philo states:

Why is it that he speaks as if of some other god, saying that he made man after the image of God, and not that he made him after his own image? Very appropriately and without any falsehood was this oracular sentence uttered by God, for no mortal thing could have been formed on the similitude of the supreme Father of the universe but only after the pattern of the second deity, who is the Logos of the supreme Being; since it is fitting that the rational soul of man should bear it the type of the divine

¹³⁸ Exod. 16:4.

¹³⁹ *LA* 3.207.

¹⁴⁰ *Son.* 1.229–230.

Logos; since in his first Word God is superior to the most rational possible nature. But he who is superior to the Logos holds his rank in a better and most singular pre-eminence, and how could the creature possibly exhibit a likeness of him in himself?¹⁴¹

Philo himself, however, explains that to call the Logos “God” is not a correct appellation.¹⁴² Also, through this Logos, which men share with God, men know God and are able to perceive him.¹⁴³ Philo’s testimony about the loose use of the title God for a nondivinity is extremely important in evaluating the usage of the term found in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament writings. It is especially important because it is the testimony contemporary with the New Testament writers. Moreover, it is a document of the usage and meaning of these two Greek expressions, one with the definite article *ho* for designating God as the One, the transcendent being, *ho theos*, and the other one without the article, *theos*, which designates a being or an entity with divine quality, for example, as a second dependent God, but not identified with the supreme God, the One. There is only one instance in the Christian literature where this philological usage and differentiation explained by Philo is quoted, namely in the Gospel of John 1:1: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. Thus Logos (Word) was divine, but it was not God the Father, the One.

Summary of Philo’s Concept of the Logos

Philo fused the biblical concept of the Hebrew Logos and Hebrew Wisdom with the Platonic concept of Ideas or Forms and the Stoic concept of Logos as the world-permeating noetic element into one doctrine broad enough to accommodate diversified philosophical and religious traditions. Philo’s doctrine of the Logos is blurred by his mystical and religious vision, but his Logos is clearly the second individual derived from one God as hypostatization of God’s Creative Power, Wisdom. The supreme is God and next is Wisdom or Logos of God.¹⁴⁴ Logos has many names, as did Zeus in the Stoic tradition,¹⁴⁵ and multiple functions. Earthly wisdom is but a copy of this celestial Wisdom. It was represented in historical times by the tabernacle through which God sent an image of the divine excellence as a representation and copy of Wisdom (Lev. 16:16; Her. 112–113). This Logos is apportioned into an infinite number of parts in humans; thus, we impart the divine Logos. As a result, we acquire some likeness to the Father and the Creator of all.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ *QG* 2.62.

¹⁴² *Son.* 1.230.

¹⁴³ *LA* 1.37–38.

¹⁴⁴ *Op.* 24; *Hermética* II.14.

¹⁴⁵ *SVF*, I.537; Cleanthes, Diogenes Laertius 7.135, 147; *LA* 1.43, 45, 46.

¹⁴⁶ *Her.* 234–236.

The Logos is the bond of the universe and mediator extended in nature. The Father eternally begat the Logos and constituted him as an unbreakable bond of the universe that produces harmony.¹⁴⁷ The Logos, mediating between God and the world, is neither uncreated as God nor created as men. So, in Philo's view, the Father is the supreme Being and the Logos, as his chief messenger, stands between Creator and creature. The Logos is an ambassador and suppliant, neither unbegotten nor begotten as are sensible things.¹⁴⁸

Wisdom, the Daughter of God, is in reality masculine because powers have truly masculine descriptions, whereas virtues are feminine. That which is in the second place after the masculine Creator was *called* feminine, according to Philo, but her *priority* is masculine; so the Wisdom of God is both masculine and feminine.¹⁴⁹ Wisdom that is imparted to humans as an illuminating power flows from the divine Logos.¹⁵⁰

The Logos is the cupbearer of God. He pours himself into happy souls.¹⁵¹ The soul comes from the divine breath of the Father/Ruler. It is the invisible and immortal portion.

The Logos is described metaphorically as "God's Son" and is a "paraclete" to humans, at least to prominent humans such as priests.¹⁵² By extension, this function of the Logos could be later understood by Christians as being the Holy Spirit.

Those people who are enlightened and who have purified souls perceive God as a threefold image of one subject, one image of the living God, whereas others who are not yet made perfect with respect to the important virtues see the other two entities as "shadows" and have "a vision of three," so they perceive God as a Triad. Still, by contemplation of God's works, they can approximate the truth.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ *Plant.* 9–10.

¹⁴⁸ *Her.* 205.

¹⁴⁹ *Fug.* 50–52.

¹⁵⁰ *Fug.* 137–138.

¹⁵¹ *Somn.* 2.249.

¹⁵² *Mos.* 2.134.

¹⁵³ *Abr.* 119–123.

The Development of Jewish Messianic Traditions

The Source of Christian Scripture and Doctrines

Having discussed the philosophical religion of Philo of Alexandria, who expanded the Greek philosophical concepts of the Logos and fused it with the biblical religious ideas of the Hebrews, we now turn our attention to the development of Jewish messianic traditions. The Jewish messianic tradition was not linked to the concept of the Hebrew or Greek Logos. This link probably first developed with the Fourth Gospel and later with speculations of the Christian Apologists in the period of Hellenistic influence.

Christianity originated as a Jewish messianic and political movement, at a trying time for the Jewish nation, with a group that believed that the Messiah had come. The technical term or noun *messiah* (the “anointed one”; in Greek, *christos*) appears in the Old Testament writings (1 Sam. 12:3, 5; 24:7; 26:9; 2 Sam. 2:14; 22:51; 23:1; 2 Chron. 6:42; Pss. 18:51; 28:8; 89:20, 38, 51; 132:10; Isa. 45:1; Lam. 4:20; Hab. 3:13). It was used widely as a title in Jewish culture where kings were always called messiahs, or “anointed ones.” The Hebrew term *messiah* (מָשִׁיחַ = *mashiyach* = anointed) derives from the verb *mashach* (מָשַׁח) meaning “to smear,” “to anoint,” “to anoint a king.” The awaited Messiah (1 Sam. 2:10, 2:35; Pss. 2:2; 132:17; 1 Enoch 48:10; 52:4), however, belonged to the future and the king to the present. Because these concepts were not entirely clear, one might use the term to mean either the eschatological Messiah or the present ruler or prominent leader. All political zealots were considered Messiahs and were associated with the hope for national restoration, that is, salvation (Acts 1:6).¹

¹ Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1988; reprint of 1979 edition). One may find reviews of the concept of the messiah in the Old and New Testaments and in the writings of Qumran in the following literature: John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995); K. E. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995); Michael O. Wise, *The First Messiah: Investigating the Savior before Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1999); Stanley E. Porter, ed., *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007).

But there were other aspects of salvation associated with the Messiah, namely, the yearning for immortality and the problem of moral evil expressed in the longing for universal justice. Religious designs achieving immortality are conditioned by moral conduct and are linked to cosmic history, which is defined by a worldview. In general terms, the old Hebrew prophets saw history as a linear process governed by God who was concerned with his chosen people. The historical epochs were visualized as periods of reward for moral behavior and obeying the Jewish Law and as periods of punishment for its abandonment and transgressions. The consummation of history they expected would occur with the arrival of the human descendant of the line of David, a Messiah (the Anointed One) who would be endowed by God with supernatural wisdom and power to rule over the terrestrial, though idealized, Kingdom of God. Before its coming, the world would be subjected to tribulations and a Day of Judgment, considered as a punishment of the wicked for their transgressions, and only the survivors, that is, the worthy ones, would participate in this new ideal Kingdom. This original scheme, however, evolved with time and produced several variants. In the Hebrew culture, we can differentiate several stages of visualization of this scheme of history.

EARLY TRADITIONS

Preexilic and Exilic Tradition of the Messianic Kingdom

Messianic ideas began to develop in Judaism with the expectation of political restoration after Palestine was conquered by the Assyrians (ca. 722 and 701 B.C.E.) and Babylonians (r. 589–587 B.C.E.). In 745 Tiglath-Pileser (r. 745–727 B.C.E.) ascended the throne in Assyria and in 739 he conquered Syria. Subsequently he subjugated several small kingdoms and cities to pay tribute, among them Israel under King Menachem (r. 742–737 B.C.E.) (2 Kgs. 15:19). In 734 a number of small states entered into an alliance for the so-called Syro-Ephraimite war against the king, but King Ahaz of Judah refused to participate. In retaliation, the alliance intended to overthrow the Davidic Dynasty (2 Kgs. 15:38, 16:5; Isa. 7:1). King Ahaz (r. 736–721 B.C.E.) turned to Assyria for help, and in response King Tiglath-Pileser invaded the upper Jordan region, took Gilead and Galilee, taking many Israelites to Assyria (2 Kgs. 15:29). Tiglath-Pileser died in 727 and then King Hoshea (r. 732–724 B.C.E.) of Israel refused to pay tribute to the successor, Shalmaneser (r. 727–722 B.C.E.). Assyria then invaded Israel in 724 and occupied its capital Samaria in 722 (2 Kgs. 17:1–5). When the rest of the Israelites were taken into captivity, the land was resettled with captives from other lands, for example, from Babylonia (2 Kgs. 17:24). In 721 King Ahaz of Judah died and was succeeded by Hezekiah (r. 721–693 B.C.E.), who also acted as Ahaz's coregent (2 Kgs. 18:1). When the successor of Shalmaneser, Sargon II (r. 722–705 B.C.E.), died in 705, this became an occasion for a revolt in the subjugated countries, including Judah

(2 Kgs. 18:5). Sargon's successor, Sennacherib (r. 705–681 B.C.E.), eventually subjugated Ashdod, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Judah in 701 and forced them to pay tribute (2 Kgs. 18:13–16). Then followed a succession of kings in Judah who are classified by the authors of the book of Kings as godless and turning to the worship of idols and even human sacrifices of the royal sons. Only when Josiah (r. 638–609 B.C.E.) became king in 638 was there a cultic renewal in Palestine. It is reported that during his reign the old books of the Law were discovered in the temple in Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 22:8–10), which became the basis for the renewal of the covenant, the introduction of the Passover celebration, and the abolition of Gentile cults and human sacrifices (2 Kgs. 23:1–27). Josiah was, however, killed by the Egyptian pharaoh, Neco, at the battle of Megiddo. The pharaoh imposed a tribute on Judah and installed Jehoiakim as king in Judah (r. 609–598 B.C.E.) (2 Kgs. 23:31–37). Assyria was now defeated by the rising Persian Empire.

Nineveh fell in 612 and the new Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605–562 B.C.E.), first defeated Egypt in 605 at Carchemish and then Judah in 598 (2 Kgs. 24:1–4). King Jehoiakim was taken prisoner, and many Judaeans, including the king, were taken as captives to Babylon for construction work (2 Kgs. 24:10–17). The next king Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, ruled only three months and was then taken prisoner, and his uncle was made king under the name of Zedekiah (r. 597–587 B.C.E.). He rebelled in 587 but was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, killed the sons of King Zedekiah, blinded him, and took captive all Judaeans, leaving a few to till the soil (2 Kgs. 25:11–17). The history from Josiah to Zedekiah is described by the prophet Jeremiah (b. 650, prophet since 626), who witnessed the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. When Nebuchadnezzar left Judah, he made Gedaliah governor of the province. Eventually the successor of Nebuchadnezzar, his son, King Evil-Merodach (r. 562–560 B.C.E.), freed King Jehoiachin. When Cyrus (r. 559–529 B.C.E.) became king, he allowed the Israelites in 538 to return to their land from Babylon, and for that reason the prophets called him “Messiah.” Palestine became a Persian province and the Jews rebuilt their city and temple from 536 to 515 (2 Chron. 36:22–23; Ezra 1–3).

The historical background of the epoch from about 740 to the return from Babylonian exile is described in the book of prophecies ascribed to Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah. Isaiah (ca. 740–ca. 680 B.C.E.) was a chronicler in the court of King Uzziah. The book ascribed to him was written by several authors during an extended period of time until its canonical shape was codified ca. 400. Those who claim that Isaiah was the only author must admit then that he knew the event that was to take place a century later, namely involving Cyrus (r. 559–529 B.C.E.), which is explicitly mentioned in this book (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). No prophecy ever was given in such explicit terms before that event in history. One of the first to notice that the prophecies in the Old Testament referred to historical situations of the contemporary people was Michael Servetus (1511–1553 C.E.),

biblical scholar, scientist, and religious reformer, in his commentary on Pagnini's edition of the Bible.²

The book of Isaiah and the book of Jeremiah are two of the most important books for the formulation of Jewish theology and the formation of the messianic movement in the first century C.E. In the Qumran caves there were found twenty-one copies of the book of Isaiah, the third in number after the Psalms (thirty-six copies) and Deuteronomy (twenty-nine copies). The book contains a well-developed theology. The commonly used description for God in the expression "the Holy One of Israel" meant that God is a separate being apart from the rest of the world and the Lord of his "chosen" nation (Isa. 45:4), governed by priests through cultic ceremonies. The nation was also holy, that is, separated, from other peoples, a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation," and having a special mission (Exod. 19:5–6).

Such was the state of affairs, it seems, that Isaiah found among the Israelites. Isaiah added to such a concept a new dimension – a moral one, which included exhortation to righteousness (tz^edakah) (צְדָקָה) and social justice (mishpat) (מִשְׁפָּט). The restoration of proper obedience to the Torah involved cleansing and redemption (Isa. 1:18). The old concept of righteousness was a conformity to the accepted standard, which was the practice of the mainly ritualistic law and sacrifices. Isaiah declared such practices useless and even abhorrent to God:

I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts.... Bringing oblations is futile, incense is an abomination to me. (Isa. 1:11–13)

Isaiah and other prophets now propagated righteousness as ethical behavior in conformity to God's way by the introduction of systemic social justice and not only distributive justice as practice of individual morality. As a result of this reform in behavior, there will be peace, deliverance, prosperity, and an end of violence and oppression of people, and nations will live in peace (Isa. 1:18–20, 26; 2:2–4; 5:7; 32:17; 45:8; 48:18; 61:1–2). Social justice meant "rescue the oppressed, defend the orphans, plead for the widow" (Isa. 1:17). Or as Malachi says: "I will be swift ... against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me" (Mal. 1:5).

Isaiah's God, Yahweh, had several characteristics:

1. He is the Savior, that is, he delivers the nation and individuals from oppression and bad times (Isa. 12:2; 37:35; 59:16–20; 60:16–18). But this

² "And that which is revealed by the prophets is not revealed for them, but it is revealed for us, and for us they prophesy.... Thus there was no enigmatic vision of the future, but rather a view of the present things grasped in a vision." Quoted in M. Hillar with Claire S. Allen, *Michael Servetus: Intellectual Giant, Humanist and Martyr* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), p. 74.

is contingent on removing the evil acts of the Israelites before the eyes of God (Isa. 1:16–20; 56:1; 59:1–4, 9–19; 62:11).

2. He is a Redeemer, that is, he will recover his own property, the country, and the people from political captivity (Isa. 43:1–3, 14; 49:6–7; 52:1–3), in accordance with the meaning of the word in Hebrew culture (Lev. 25:47–49).
3. He is a Father, Israelites are God’s children (Isa. 45:11). Isaiah uses the term “Holy One of Israel” instead of Father. Later prophets in postexilic times use the term “Father” and the term “sons” (Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Hos. 11:1).
4. He is the Supreme Ruler and the only God (Isa. 2:17–18; 37:19). This formulation is a result of contact with the Babylonian religion through which the author wanted to emphasize Jewish absolute monotheism and reflected, on the one hand, an evolution in the concept of deity, and, on the other, an explanation that, in spite of the fact that Israel was conquered by Assyria and Babylon, their gods were “the work of human hands – wood and stone” (Isa. 37:19). God is using Assyria or Babylon as a temporary punishment of Israel (Isa. 10:5–6).
5. God is characterized as a Spirit or Holy Spirit, which means that he acts through his gifts, power, and influence (Isa. 11:2; 28:6; 40:7; 42:1; 59:19; 61:1; 63:14).

In Isaiah’s view Israel was a chosen nation that was destined to be the “light” of other nations (Isa. 42:6; 49:6) and would bring righteousness and justice to them (Isa. 42:1, 6). It was described also as a “suffering servant” (Isa. 53:1–12), which suffered under hostile foreign nations and as a punishment for its deviation from God’s way (Isa. 50–53). The last expression was applied to Israel but was later transposed to the Messiah, who was interpreted as the “suffering Messiah,” the one appointed to spread the glory of the Jewish God among other nations.

Judaism was always a fiercely nationalistic and down-to-earth religion. There was no differentiation between state and religion. The clergy was a dominating class. It fiercely defended privileges and cursed people if it met any opposition or dissatisfaction with its rule (Mal. 3:8). Its theology was closely intermingled with the political, social, and economic life. In politics it was always associated with conquest, a strong nationalism, and domination over other nations. The Jewish God gave the patriarchs the conquered land in temporal possession (Gen. 12:1–3; 13:14–17). He regulated social life by his detailed commands and instituted priestly power. He also regulated the economic activity of the Jews, for example, mandating every seventh year a Sabbath Year for land cultivation, for remittance of debts, and release of slaves or every fiftieth year, a Jubilee Year, for the return of property to its original owner.³ The words used

³ Exod. 25:10–11; Deut. 15:1–3, 12–14; Lev. 25:28.

in a theological context, such as kingdom, king, lord, apostle, worship, prayer, judge, judgment, law, and righteousness, are all terms associated with the ruling power. Other terms, such as merits, debts, redemption, and forgiveness, all originated from the financial system. Terms such as hosts, armor, sword, spear, salvation, and fortress come from the military institution. One of the most popular attributes ascribed to God was to call him “God of the armies (God of Hosts).”

Preexilic and exilic prophets expected a Messiah from David’s line, endowed with supernatural powers, as God’s anointed ruler, who would rule the Messianic Kingdom, which would be a consummation of world history. It would be a terrestrial, though transformed, glorified reality established for the people who survived the tribulations preceding it. The idea of tribulation to precede the coming of the ideal Messianic Kingdom of Israel provided the means to sort out God’s people from the others. The future Messiah would be elevated to this dignity through his suffering and death according to a certain later interpretation of the scripture (*4 Ezra 7:29*).

Another pivotal feature of Judaism was its eschatological expectation of bodily resurrection. In the old Jewish tradition before the Hellenistic influence, the dead were placed in their tombs, but they really resided in Sheol (שְׁאוֹל), the underground place where there was no continuation of life. The individual could continue his life on earth only through his reputation or through his son (*Isa. 38:18–19*; *Sir. 14:12–19*; *17:28*). But the Jews also believed since the oldest times that there was an end to their tribulations in the form of an eschatological resurrection of the persons who await in Sheol to be judged. Isaiah wrote in the eighth century B.C.E.: “Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead” (*Isa. 26:19*). The same idea is found in Psalm 16 [15]:9–11, “Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices, my body also rests secure. For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit. You show me the path of life.” Isaiah envisions that this eschatological Messianic Kingdom will come after the apocalyptic judgment (*24:1–6*), culminating in a messianic banquet (*25:6*), a condemnation of all other nations and enemies of Israel (*14:3–32*), and the resurrection to eternal life on earth in material abundance (*25:8*; *30:19–26*; *32:15–20*). Salvation is explicitly described as a life in a just, idealized world and in material abundance.

Kingdom of God Tradition

The second tradition is a modification of the previous one in which the Kingdom of God replaces the Kingdom of the Messiah. Here the ruler will be God himself, and the coming of this Kingdom will be preceded by the coming of Elijah (*Mal. 3:23*). God himself will be the judge at the judgment on the “day of Yahweh” (*Isa. 24–28*).

The Son of Man Tradition

The third tradition was developed in the book of Daniel. The book itself was written over several centuries but its final redaction dates from ca. 168 to 164 B.C.E. In this tradition, God rules in the Kingdom of God through an angelic, supernatural type of being who has the appearance of a man and is called, therefore, the Son of Man:⁴

As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being [a Son of Man] coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. (Dan. 7:13–14)

This is the first appearance of the term describing a mysterious being to whom God granted special powers and who looked like a human being, a man, later seen as a supernatural being, as the vicarious ruler of an eschatological Kingdom of God.

The concept of the resurrection and Messianic Kingdom became more poignant after the Maccabean insurrection (167–164 B.C.E.) when the issue arose of the fate of the righteous ones who were martyred during the struggle: “Those who gave over their bodies in suffering for the sake of religion were not only admired by mortals, but also were deemed worthy to share in a divine inheritance” (4 Macc. 18:3). Jewish theology in expectation of God’s rendering universal justice emphasized the resurrection, and it was explicitly expressed in the parts of Daniel written after 164 C.E. “Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2), and “Justice has laid up for you intense and eternal fire and tortures, and these throughout all time” (4 Macc. 12:12). This was to happen at “the end of the days” (Dan. 12:13). But there is also an indication that some Jews were accepting from the time of the Greek conquest Greek ideas about “the immortal souls received from God” (4 Macc. 18:23).

Resurrection would thus fulfill divine justice, and those unrighteous ones who were condemned would die; those, on the other hand, who were righteous ones would be resurrected to live in the permanent earthly Kingdom of God, justly ruled under perfect divine law (Dan. 12:1–3).

Jews expected after a series of trying periods a final fulfillment of their history not unlike expectations of the futuristic epoch of “bliss” in other cultures. In the Danielic tradition, the God-opposing powers produce tribulations for the saints who have an opportunity to prove their loyalty to God. This messianic theology can be understood as referring to several cosmic and earthly events. A soteriological event, that is, the saving action of God for his people, might include liberation from the oppression of foreign invaders, social liberation

⁴ Maurice Casey, *The Solution to the “Son of Man” Problem* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2007; reprint 2009).

of God's people from social oppression, and the institution of a just society with systemic social justice. An apocalyptic event, that is, the event preceding the eschatological age of eternal bliss, is defined by Amos (5:18) as the Day of Yahweh and will be marked by a judgment (Isa. 2:12–22; Zeph. 1:7–18). This event is described in graphic, horrifying terms involving all possible horrors known to the ancient people (Ezek. 38, 39). An eschatological event referring to the “end of the age” is vaguely defined but visualized as the age of eternal earthly bliss, which includes political independence, social justice, and the personal well-being of faithful Israelites. This age will end all the tribulations of the Jewish people and will be marked by a true governing of God over the Jewish people and all nations. In the Danielic tradition, the Kingdom becomes a supernatural realm and the ruler of it will be an angelic being who, through resurrection, will become a supernatural being.

FURTHER EVOLUTION OF MESSIANISM

As predicted in their messianic prophecies, Jews at the beginning of the first century expected a Messiah who was supposed to be the son of David (i.e., descended from the Davidic line) and would appear as a liberator of the nation (Matt. 22:41–42; 21:5, 21:9). This expectation was so widely spread that even the Roman writers Tacitus (55–ca. 120 C.E.) and Suetonius (ca. 69–ca. 122 C.E.) knew it in the form of a certain Eastern prophecy being professed by priests in Judaea and linked with the fall of Jerusalem, indicating that from Judaea would come a ruler of the world who would appear “when the Orient would triumph and from Judaea would go forth the men destined to rule the world.”⁵ Suetonius adds that the Judaeans thought that that man would be of their race. But he explains, as Josephus does, that it refers to Vespasian (and Titus), who was declared emperor when he was in Judaea.⁶ Eusebius (*H.E.* 1.6.1) and Epiphanius (*Panarion* 20.2) interpreted the prophecy of Genesis 49:10 that the expected Messiah would come when there would be no native ruler from Judaea. Such a situation, according to them, arose when Herod became king. This prophecy can be traced to the book of Micah (5:2):

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from the old, from ancient days.

This certainly served as a model for the Gospel stories.

The idea of tribulations that are to precede the coming of the ideal kingdom of Israel, as we have seen, underwent changes as well from an event in the

⁵ Tacitus, *The Histories*, a new translation by Kenneth Wellesley (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980), V.13.

⁶ Suetonius, *Lives of Twelve Caesars*, with English translation by J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), *Vespasian* 8, p. 273.

Prophets designed to sort out God's chosen people from the rest of the nations, to a mechanism produced by God-opposing powers to provide for the saints the opportunity to prove their loyalty to God in the Danielic tradition.

Also, the concept of the resurrection underwent some changes in various traditions. In the earlier tradition, only those who belonged to the living generation took part in the Kingdom. In the later tradition under the influence of ethical considerations of Zoroastrianism, the dead will rise either to receive the judgment of God or to enter the Kingdom. The literary production after the book of Daniel continued and gave us further elaborations on the theme.

The Apocalyptic Tradition Attributed to Enoch

The Enoch tradition continues the eschatology in the book of Daniel of the supernatural Kingdom of God ruled by the angelic Son of Man. It comes to us in three texts ascribed to the legendary scribe and prophet, Enoch, seventh descendant of Adam and Eve, mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 5:24: "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him." This tradition was the source of many stories about the mysteries of the universe, the predetermined course of history, and the future of the world. The book was written originally in Aramaic or in Hebrew in Judaea in a proto-Essene community and was used in the Qumran community. It was rediscovered in three versions: in the Ethiopic manuscripts in the eighteenth century by James Bruce (called *1 Enoch* or *Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch*); in the Slavonic language in Belgrade in the nineteenth century by Sokolov (called *2 Enoch* or *Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch*); and in the Hebrew (called *3 Enoch* or *Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch*) discovered by Hugo Odeberg in 1922.⁷

The *1 Ethiopic Enoch*, dated from ca. 170 B.C.E. to ca. 50 C.E., is of interest to us as it is contemporary with Paul and the developing messianic movement. Its theology represents the current Jewish orthodoxy and thus throws some light on the origin of ideas found in Paul's writings, in the Gospels, and in the Revelation. It is the only complete version of the Enoch tradition and is known today in about forty manuscripts, of which the oldest three are dated from the fifteenth century. Translations into Ethiopic probably were done between the fourth and seventh centuries. Its chapters 37–71 titled *Parables* portray the "Revelations" to the patriarch "Enoch, the seventh from Adam," concerning the times at the end of cosmic history. The book was used by the authors of such extrabiblical literature as *Jubilees* (second century B.C.E.), the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (second century B.C.E.), the *Testament of*

⁷ *The Book of Enoch the Prophet*, translated from an Ethiopic manuscript by Richard Laurence (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1883; reprint, San Diego: Wizards Bookshelf, 1983); *1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch*, translation and introduction by E. Isaac, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 5–89.

Moses (or the *Assumption of Moses*, first century C.E.), the *Fourth Book of Ezra* (first century C.E.), the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (first to second century C.E.), and 2 (*Syriac Apocalypse of*) *Baruch* (first century C.E.). It is quoted in the Jewish philosophical commentary on the Law, *Zohar*, expressly by name in the Epistle of Jude (Jude 14–15). The book was used by the authors of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and by the church fathers Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria, who used it as scripture on an equal basis with the *Books of Moses*, and by Tertullian as “inspired.” Origen treated it as a revelation and derived from it his information about angelology.⁸ Many parallels to the *Book of Enoch* can be found in the Gnostic literature.⁹ From the fourth century, the book received negative reviews from Augustine, Jerome, and Hilary and was forgotten except in Ethiopia. Here it was a source of the indigenous *Book of the Mysteries of Heaven and Earth* that emulated 1 *Enoch* and led to the development of Ethiopic Christianity. Here, too, Adam, together with Satan, the demons, and fallen angels, is the source of original sin; also the protective role of various angels is more emphasized here than in Western Christianity.

There are fragments of the book in Aramaic, found at Qumran; a few fragments in Greek, including a few excerpts that were made by a monk, Georgius Syncellus circa 800 C.E., and one Latin fragment. Some divide this work into five books: *The Book of the Watchers* (chaps. 1–36), *The Book of Similitudes or Parables* (chaps. 37–71), *The Book of Astronomical Writings* (chaps. 72–82), *The Book of Dream Visions* (chaps. 83–90), and the book of the *Epistle of Enoch* (chaps. 91–107).

In its first five chapters, Enoch refers to his vision of heaven in which future eschatological events of the last days were shown to him; there will be great upheavals, all that is on earth will perish, and “the God of the universe, the Holy Great One” will come and judge all including the righteous; the righteous will be granted peace, the elect will be preserved, and the wicked will be destroyed. All themes treated in the *Book of Enoch* derive from the Old Testament writings.

Chapters 6 to 16 describe the transgressions of the angels, who are also called Watchers, “the sons of God,” the names of whose leaders are quoted. They descended from heaven numbering two hundred and engendered demons (giants) with human women. This is an elaboration of a short reference in Genesis 6:1–4 into a complete theology of the fallen angels. Demons were the source of corruption of humankind. They taught men the art of making weapons, sorcery, the art of making cosmetics (beautification) and jewelry, and

⁸ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 4.16; Tertullian, *On Female Dress* II.1; Origenes (Origen), *O Zasadach (De Principiis)*, translated by (przekład) Stanisław Kalinkowski (Warsawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1979), I.VIII.

⁹ James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 3rd completely revised edition, with an afterword by Richard Smith (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

the knowledge of astronomy. At first, humans fed them, but later the giants turned against the humans and killed them. For their actions the demons and their sons will be punished. First they will be locked underground until the eternal judgment, and then they will be placed in a fiery prison forever. Also, all those who collaborated with them will be destroyed, and then “the righteousness and truth shall appear forever” planted on earth, which will be characterized by peace and prosperity. As always in Jewish literature, it is emphasized that “all nations shall worship and bless” the Jewish God. This expression indicates Jewish domination over all other nations so common in Jewish scriptures (Deut. 28:1). The theme of giants populating the earth and consequently punishment of the fallen angels is widely spread in Jewish literature: *Tobit* 6:14; *Wisdom* 14:6; the *Jubilees* 4:22–24, 5:6–11; the *Damascus Document* (DC) 2.14–21; 4Q’180, *Ages of Creation*; *Sirach* 16:7. In chapters 13–16, Enoch describes his vision of heaven with several chambers (habitations); in one he met a fiery God, who told him that the giants’ flesh will perish but their spirits will inhabit the earth as evil spirits “until the great day of judgment” when they will be judged together with their wives (chap. 19.2). And judgment will be carried out by those who are righteous (1 Cor. 6:2–3). The idea of demons operating in the world and waiting for the last judgment is well established in the New Testament writings (Matt. 8:29). There is a fiery place in heaven, a “terrible place” where they will be placed in prison forever (chap. 21.10; Matt. 25:41).

In the following chapters, 17 to 36, Enoch continues in his vision an itinerary across the heavens and earth guided by angels and describes various places he finds there. Some descriptions concern the physical world and how it is maintained. We find in the *Book of Enoch* a peculiar worldview: the earth is evidently flat and supported by four stones, and the winds in the high sky control the movement of the stars. At the extremes of earth, where heaven meets the earth, are the gates to heaven (chaps. 32–35). Moreover, there are places in heaven where even the stars are punished for their transgression “because they did not arrive punctually” (chaps. 18.15–16; 21.5–7). In later chapters we learn that lightning, thunder, the sea, frost, and so on have their own spirits (chaps. 59–60), which are equated with the angels, and, for example, how the world was created and the earth founded upon the sea (chap. 69.16–29), by the oath revealed by God. The movement of luminaries, the sun, the stars, the moon, which rise and set passing through the gates of heaven, is described with all the related astronomy (chaps. 71–79) as governed by the angels. The souls of men who die will be collected in a place in heaven¹⁰ “until the day of judgment,” but the spirits of the righteous ones and the sinners are separated (chap. 22.8–11). In the “accursed valley” on earth, there is a place for those who speak against God (chap. 27.2). We even visit the place where there is “the tree of wisdom” of Genesis (chap. 32.3–6).

¹⁰ The same idea is expressed in Matt. 24:31.

In chapters 37 to 71 describing the second vision of Enoch, he receives three “parables,” or rather images or “similitudes.” In the first one (chaps. 37–44) is described the congregation of the righteous, “whose deeds are hung upon the Lord of the Spirits,” and then the sinners who will be judged. There is a strong condemnation of the kings and rulers who “shall be delivered into the hand of the righteous and holy ones.” The angels, however, will be interceding for humankind. Among them, four are listed: Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, and Phanuel. Also Wisdom is mentioned here as first descending to humans on earth, but, not finding her dwelling, she returns to heaven and is replaced by Iniquity (chap. 42).

The second “parable” (chaps. 45–57) concerns those who deny the angels and God (“the name of the Lord of the Spirits and the congregation of the holy ones”). They are that portion of sinners who are destined for punishment and affliction. Now follows a description of a vision of God accompanied by “another individual, whose face was like that of a human being” and “who was born of human beings.” The angel explained to Enoch that he is “the Son of Man, to whom belongs the righteousness, and with whom righteousness dwells. And he will open all the hidden storerooms; for the Lord of the Spirits has chosen him and he is destined to be victorious.” And then follows the description of his victory over the kings. He will conquer the iniquitous kings who denied the name of the Lord of the Spirits and his Messiah, in an obvious reference to the Hellenistic rulers who dominated Israel. With him there are the faithful who suffered in the name of God, referring most likely to the martyrs of the Maccabean period. The Son of Man was given a name; “even before the creation of the sun and the moon, before the creation of the stars, he was given a name in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits (chap. 48.2–4). And “he is the light of the Gentiles” and will reveal the “wisdom of the Lord of the Spirits to the righteous and the holy ones.” For this purpose, he was chosen and was concealed in the presence of the Lord before the creation of the world. He is the Messiah (chap. 48.10) who will preserve the righteous. Thus, *1 Enoch* knows a vague concept of a divine plan for a Messiah, who will be full of majesty and power and who will be born as a human being. It is not clear, however, whether this human Son of Man was already born and returned to God waiting to fulfill his soteriological and eschatological mission in a specific historical context or is a vision that will become a reality in the future.

The Messiah will judge, but during the days of trouble, that is the tribulation before the resurrection, the sinners will have a chance to repent because God is compassionate and merciful (chap. 49.2–4). The righteous upon their salvation will be changed into beings resembling angels and will inhabit the earth. Then follows a metaphorical description of an idealized earth under the dominion of the Messiah (chaps. 51–52). The other images (chaps. 56–57) describe the wars afflicting the earth, the invasion of “a whole array of chariots,” probably meaning the Romans, who will be defeated and will worship God.

The third “parable” (chaps. 58–68) concerns the righteous and the elect. The last day for the elect will be the day of the covenant; for the sinners, the day of the inquisition. Somehow they will be punished by two monsters, a female named Leviathan, the monster of the sea, and a male named Behemoth, the monster of the dry desert (chap. 60.7–9). Judgment will be done by the Elect One or the Son of Man, who will assemble all the spirits and powers of heaven, and “he shall judge all the works of the holy ones in heaven above, weighing in the balance their deeds” (chap. 61.8). He will destroy all the sinners and all the oppressors by his word (chap. 62.2). The Son of Man now is described as the one who was concealed from the beginning; he existed in secret, revealed only to the elect. He will judge all the kings, governors, high officials, and landlords of the earth, though they will be risen for a short time to bless and glorify God, but then they will be given punishment on account of their deeds (chap. 63.9–12). The punishment will avenge those who have been oppressed by them. The punishment will be also for their denial of God and debauchery (chap. 62.8–10). Others who are condemned are those who practice sorcery and who “make molten images” or “gods fashioned with their own hands” (chaps. 65.6E; 46.7). We find here also a vision of the triumphant coming of the Son of Man (chaps. 46–48). Chapters 65 and 67 as well as 106 are a vision of Noah inserted in the text. The saints and the elect will be risen again to a new eternal life as transformed beings on a transformed earth (chap. 45.5) and will dwell with the Son of Man (the Elect One); “they shall eat and rest and rise with the Son of Man forever and ever” (chaps. 61.11–13; 62.15).

The punishment will involve also the angels who seduced the inhabitants of the earth and who will be condemned to the “burning valley” and waters that become transformed and become fire (chap. 67.4, 13). The names of their leaders are listed in chapter 69.2 with the description of their acts. For example, we learn that an angel named Gader’el seduced Eve and taught men to make weapons, the tools of war and death. Also, it was a crime to teach men how to write, that is, to “use ink and paper.” By this they acquired knowledge that consumes them and by which they will perish (chap. 69.6, 9–11). The third parable ends with a vision of the Son of Man, who will appear on his throne, who will be the judge on earth, and who will destroy everything wicked. Afterward, his name will be exalted.

In the next astronomical part of the vision, the spirit of Enoch ascended to the heavens before the Son of Man and to the Lord and was shown how the celestial bodies circle the earth (chaps. 70–82). He develops a calendar based on calculating time by a motion of the sun, not of the moon, as in the Pharisaic lunar calendar. In this calendar the years contain 364 days and not $365\frac{1}{4}$ (chaps. 74.12; 82.6).

In the following part (chaps. 79–82), Enoch summarizes his vision of the last days. He is allowed to return to earth for one year in order to teach his son

Methuselah the new law and to preserve the writings of his father for future generations. Then follows an obscure description of the universe and how it operates.

In chapters 83 to 84, Enoch describes yet another vision of cosmic calamity and destruction. But he entreats God to preserve the righteous and upright race for posterity.

In other visions in chapters 85 to 90, Enoch recapitulates in an allegorical metaphor the biblical history of the Israelites from Adam and Eve to the Maccabaeian period and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. Oxen symbolize the patriarchs; sheep are symbols of the faithful Israelites; beasts and birds of prey symbolize the Gentiles oppressing Israel; a horned sheep, a rising Jewish leader; a snow-white cow with huge horns, the Messiah.

In chapters 91 to 93, Enoch speaks with the knowledge he acquired as “revealed from the heavenly vision ... and from the words of the holy angels” and attempts again to outline the events from the beginning of the world to the end of time. But this time they are arranged in “world-weeks,” where a day stands for a hundred years and a week for seven hundred years. This is also the first attempt to outline in a sequential order the events at the end of time when the messianic era will begin. The Law, for example, was established in the fourth week, the temple of Solomon was constructed in the fifth week.

The messianic week begins with the eighth world-week. Then the sinners will be given into the hands of the righteous for judgment, and the house of the Great King will arise in glory to endure forever. In the ninth week, the judgment of righteousness takes place, in consequence of which the works of the godless will disappear from the earth and the world will be appointed to destruction. In the tenth week on the seventh day, the great eternal judgment will take place in which the punishment of the angels is carried out. Hereafter the first heaven passes away to make a place for a new one whose coming marks the end of history (chap. 91.12–16).

In the following chapters, 94 to 107, Enoch exhorts people to follow “the ways of righteousness” and condemns the sinners, the ungodly, those who commit iniquity, those who have power, and those who acquire riches. Enoch shows social concern by classifying as sinners those who economically exploit and oppress people:

Woe unto those who build oppression and injustice!
 Who lay foundations of deceit.
 They shall soon be demolished;
 and they shall have no peace...
 Those who amass gold and silver,
 they shall quickly be destroyed.
 Woe unto you, O rich people!
 For you have put trust in your wealth.
 You shall ooze out of your riches,
 For you do not remember the Most High.

In the days of your affluence, you committed oppression,
 You have become ready for death, and for the day of darkness and the
 day of great judgment! (chap. 94.6–9)

According to *1 Enoch*, there are three judgments in the course of an eternally enduring Messianic Kingdom. The first judgment involves the sinners and it is done by the righteous, the second is the judgment of the righteous, and the third the judgment of the angels. When the resurrection of the dead takes place is not indicated. The conception is that at the last judgment the risen dead of the earlier generations are added to the survivors of the last generation, who must logically be thought to be in the resurrection mode of existence.

Chapter 105 seems to be corrupted, but one reading of it might be that God, when talking about the last days, says that a reward shall take place over the whole earth, for “I and my Son are united with them forever in the upright path in their lifetime and there shall be peace unto you” (chap. 105.2). Thus, the Messiah here might be also indicated as the Son of God.

The *Book of Enoch* follows the basic conceptions of Hebrew eschatology that the natural world is transient and is dominated by demons and angels. Demons are the offspring of the daughters of men and the angels who rebelled (Gen. 6:1–4), and they trouble men on earth. Angels intercede before God against the accusations produced by “the wicked one” (ὁ πονηρός) among them, personified as Satan, against the inhabitants of earth. The disobedient angels will be judged at the end. The evil on earth comes from the demons who have permission to dominate the world. The final redemption will come by instituting the Messianic Kingdom preceded by tribulations (“temptations” = πείρασμοί).

A comparison of passages in *The Book of Enoch* and the New Testament scriptures demonstrates remarkable parallelism, clearly showing that it is the source of ideas, themes, expressions, and doctrines found in the Gospels, Acts, apostolic letters, Paul’s letters, and John’s Apocalypse. These concepts involve the future resurrection, final judgment, condemnation, demonology, immortality, the reign of the righteous ones and the Messianic Kingdom, the rule of the Son of Man, and the nature of the Messiah. The *Book of Enoch* serves as a blueprint for the New Testament writings and the pronouncements of Jesus. It is especially a remarkable source document for the theological doctrines we find in Paul, such as his doctrine of the elect and predestination, and salvation by faith. It is also the source of Paul’s miraculous vision (2 Cor. 12:1–5).

The *Book of Enoch* knows the concept of the preexistence of the Son of Man, the Messiah, who “was concealed in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits prior to the creation of the world” (chap. 68.6), and who “was given a name in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits ... even before the creation of the sun and the moon” (chap. 48.2–3). In him dwells the spirit of wisdom, and he is the Elect One according to the pleasure of God (chap. 49.1–4).

He could be represented in other apocalyptic literature as just appearing on earth with his mission.

The *Book of Enoch* tells us that the Gentiles offered “sacrifices to the demons as unto gods” (chap. 19.1). This concept is obviously the source of the belief of the early Christians that the deities of the Gentiles were the fallen demons who hid behind their names and representations and performed a variety of miracles imitating those of Christ and God.

There are several remarks concerning faith. There is an obscure passage which at first appears to refer to some “lightnings” of heaven but are defined as the “names of the holy ones who dwell upon the earth and believe in the name of the Lord of the Spirits forever and ever” (chap. 43.1–4). In another passage the “faithful ones” are those “who cling to the Lord of the Spirits” (chap. 46.8). They and the holy ones are both the “righteous and elect ones.” Moreover, a passage in chapter 58.2–3 clearly explains the meaning of these “lightnings”: “The righteous ones shall be in the light of the sun and the elect ones in the light of eternal life.” It refers to the predestined elect ones who are represented by cosmic lights. Such a conclusion is supported by the following chapter in which the “holy ones” are contrasted with “those who deny the name of the Lord of the Spirits” (chap. 45.1). Moreover, the meaning of the dream Enoch had about the deluge is that he is a remnant of those who will be saved because of his faith (chap. 83.8). Thus, faith is defined as believing in the Lord of the Spirits, and the elect ones were predestined to be believers and the righteous.

Although we find in *I Enoch* the idea that righteousness is the “gift of faith” (chap. 58.5), at the last judgment angels will “measure” the faith, which will strengthen the righteousness of the believers. It suggests that one may become a believer, that is, have faith in God, and this will be regarded as a contribution to his claim of righteousness. These ideas are precursors to Paul’s doctrine of predestination by election and salvation by faith.

The book of *2 Enoch* (the original title is something like *The Book of the Holy Secrets of Enoch*) comes probably from the first century and was perhaps originally written in Aramaic or Hebrew but translated into Greek and then into Slavonic. It is known in twenty manuscripts, of which the oldest is from the fourteenth century. It is really a midrash and an amplification of Genesis 5:21–32 and covers the events from the life of Enoch to the Flood. It is a collection produced over a long period of time, uses *I Enoch*, and shows affinity with the Qumran writings because of its interest in Melchizedek. Most characteristic features of this book are a strict moral code; the transcendence of God, who acts through an intermediary, the angel Michael; an elaboration on the origin of the heavenly priest Melchizedek; and a respect for animal souls.¹¹ The book seems to be influenced in its cosmological part by the Zoroastrian concept of time, by postulating the Time of Creation as the first created being,

¹¹ *2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch*, translation and introduction by F. I. Anderson, in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, pp. 91–221.

which is separated into divisions of Finite Time, which will merge into Infinite Time at the eschatological end.¹²

The book 3 *Enoch*, whose title was coined by its discoverer H. Odeberg in 1928, is known also as the *Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch* or *The Book of Enoch by Rabbi Ishmael the High Priest*. It is a more recent work, dating from about the fifth century, and belongs to the type of mystical Jewish literature classified as Merkabah (מֵרְכָבָה). This movement developed in first-century Palestine and lasted until the tenth. The texts are concerned with the so-called doctrine of the chariot or ascension (Ma'aséh Merkabah) (מַעֲשֵׂה מֵרְכָבָה) and are associated with the mystical Jewish sects. The word Merkabah in Hebrew means a chariot, and members of the mystical sect were called “those who descend to the Chariot.” The chariot was God’s throne frequently represented in Hebrew literature; thus, this tradition referred to a mystical ascent to heaven. The mystics were organized in congregations headed by a leader and practiced mystical trance, during which they ascended to God’s throne in heaven not unlike the patriarch Enoch himself. They pronounced various oracles as the Hellenistic theurgists did, producing in this way a continuous revelation. The rabbinic establishment obviously felt threatened if they expressed pronouncements on major theological or religious issues. The other theme common to this literature was the doctrine or account of the creation (Ma'aséh B'ere'shit) (מַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית).

But the ascension theme and related stories are found in the old Jewish tradition as well. Before the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E., the mystical ascension themes were part of the apocalyptic literature and had their roots in the old biblical literature. We find such themes also in the Qumran literature. After the destruction of the temple and especially after the Bar Kokhba War, the apocalyptic fervor was replaced by religious and theological reflection redirected toward a mystical contemplation of God, who now becomes more transcendent, and toward the mysteries of heaven. This new shift in emphasis gave rise to the so-called Merkabah literature.

Rabbi Ishmael, a Palestinian scholar, is a historical figure who died shortly before the outbreak of the Bar Kokhba War in 132 C.E. The book is known in about fourteen manuscripts in Hebrew, and its original title is *The Book of the Palaces*, where the term “palaces” refers to various regions of heaven. It was produced as a combination of many traditions and probably represents a scriptural text of one of the mystical sects of Judaism. Merkabah mystical literature developed from the time of the Maccabaeen revolt and lasted well into the Middle Ages, forming a part of the Talmudic Judaism.

It is an account of how Rabbi Ishmael journeyed into heaven, saw God’s throne and chariot, received a revelation from the archangel Metatron, and viewed the wonders in the seven palaces or chambers in heaven. Rabbi

¹² Shalom Pines, “Eschatology and the Concept of Time in the Slavonic *Book of Enoch*,” in Shalom Pines, *Studies in the History of Religion: The Collected Works of Shalom Pines*, edited by Guy G. Strums (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1996), vol. IV, pp. 21–36.

Ishmael is Enoch and was taken up into heaven and miraculously transformed into an angel.

The first line of the text sets the background by quoting Genesis 5:24, which mentions how Enoch was taken up by God into heaven. Similarly, chapters 1 and 2 describe how Ishmael is taken up and passes through the heavenly palaces arranged concentrically, one within the other. Before the seventh palace, angels try to prevent his entry, so in response to his prayer God sends him archangel Metatron, also called the Prince of the Divine Presence, to guide him before God's throne, which is visualized as a fiery chariot. Just like the mystics at the height of ecstasy, Ishmael joins the angels in singing the Sanctus hymn (the Qeduššah).

In the next chapters, 3 to 16, Metatron reveals to Ishmael that he is Enoch, who was taken up by God into heaven as the righteous of the generation of the Flood and was elevated to the rank of God's vice-regent against the objection of some angels, the evil ones. They claimed that Enoch was the descendant of those who perished in the Flood and had no right to be elevated above all angels. Metatron also explains how God removed his presence, Šekinah, from the garden of Eden back to 'Arabot, the seventh heaven after men became idolaters, chief among them being Enosh. Enoch was equipped with qualities with which the world was created and is sustained: understanding, prudence, life, grace, favor, love, Torah, humility, sustenance, mercy, and reverence; God enlarged him, gave him a fiery throne, revealed to him the mysteries of wisdom, the depth of the Torah, and the thoughts of men's hearts; God gave him a majestic robe with luminaries, the name "The lesser YHWH, a Prince of the Divine Presence, knower of secrets" (chap. 48C.7), and a crown inscribed with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; Enoch received homage from all the legions of angels from all the seven heavens and all the princes of the kingdoms. His function is to "behold the secrets of heaven above and earth beneath" (chap. 48C.4). Finally he was transformed into a fiery angelic being.

Next, in chapters 17 to 40 there follows a detailed description of angelic hierarchies in seven heavens with the names of the chief angels, the description and function of the heavenly court, the description of all the fiery chariots of God, and the heavenly liturgy of reciting the Sanctus. The first heaven is called Wilon, from the Latin *velum* (curtain, veil, and designated a door curtain). It is also named in other texts as Šamayim. It seemed to be a separation between the human world and the heavenly world. The next heavens are: Raqia, Šechaqim, Zubel, Ma'on, Makon, and 'Arabot. There are two different angelologies. In one, each heaven is governed by a prince or archangel. Their names derive from a stem indicating the phenomenon over which the angel is presiding, plus a theophoric ending "el," which means God. In addition there are princes of the globes of the sun, the moon, the constellations, and the stars, that is, the planets. Above them all are seventy-two princes of the kingdoms corresponding to the nations of the world. In the other hierarchy, angels are classified by more detailed differentiation of their function in the

heavenly realm. To the names of the most important angels is added the tetragram YHWH. The angels are divided into three groups, each having also its own prince: the cherubim, who stand beside the throne, face God's majesty, and support God's Šekinah, that is, his manifestation; the ophanim, who seem to be in charge of the wheels of God's throne; and the seraphim, whose function is to burn "the tablets of Satan." These are accusations, and a list of sins of the nation of Israel to be submitted to God. Satan is aided by two other princes, the prince of Rome and the prince of Persia, the two enemy powers of Israel. There is also, presumably in the highest heaven, the archivist who keeps "the book of records" containing the records of all men's deeds that form the basis for God's judgment in the heavenly Great Law Court. The proceedings of the heavenly court resemble the proceedings of the earthly court, with the court officers, the Watchers, the holy ones, scribes, among others, and God metes out his judgment with measured justice, mercy, and truth. The wicked ones are delivered to the angels of destruction. God in heaven has four fiery chariots. Angels sing his glory by reciting the Qeduššah. However, if they do not sing in the proper order, they are annihilated by God, and new ones are created in their place.

In chapters 41 to 48, Metatron discloses to Ishmael all the secrets and wonders of the heavens. In chapter 41, Metatron/Enoch shows all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet by which heaven and earth were created, and by which "wisdom and understanding, knowledge and intelligence, humility and rectitude," and "the whole world is sustained."

In chapter 42, all natural phenomena are governed by the divine name. There is a reference to the Hebrew and Near Eastern worldview of separated "upper waters" from the "lower waters," which are the source of rainwaters.

Chapters 43 to 44 and 46 to 47 inform the reader of the things that have a soul. We learn from chapters 43 to 44 that all human souls are preexistent, that they were created and stored in the storehouse in heaven, and that then they enter into a body. After death, the souls undergo judgment, and those of the righteous return to the throne of God standing behind the veil of God. These speculations reflect the Hellenistic influence on Hebrew thought. And they contrast with other apocalyptic literature where the souls of the righteous are kept in Sheol until the day of the resurrection. Moreover, there are three types of souls: the souls of the wicked, of the righteous, and of the intermediate. The souls of the wicked after the judgment after death, the grave judgment, are brought down to Sheol for punishment "with fire in Gehinnom." The souls of the intermediate, too, are brought down, but in order to be "purified from their iniquity by fire." The righteous and the patriarchs among them entreat God to redeem his people and nation. But God answers that the sins of Israel delay the time of redemption.

In chapters 46 and 47, we learn more details about Hebrew cosmology. Stars, like angels, are animate beings and have their fiery bodies and their spirits/souls. Their names are given by God and their souls are in the second heaven, Raqia,

“serving the world” by rising and setting (being “counted in” and “counted out”). They worship God during the day by “reciting a song.” In chapter 47, we learn what happens to the angels who are punished for “not reciting the song at the right time or in a proper and fitting manner.” The angels analogically to humans have their bodies and their souls/spirits. Their bodies are burned “in the fire of the Omnipresent One, which goes out of his little finger.... But their spirits and souls return to their Creator and all of them stand behind their Maker.”

Chapters 45 and 48 are messianic and deal with the vision of the end time. Chapter 45 begins with a discussion of the curtain that is spread before the throne of God and separates him from the rest of heaven. It shields the angels and others from the destructive radiance of God’s glory. Only the Prince of the Divine Presence may go within the curtain. The curtain itself is the heavenly equivalent of the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and in the temple. On the heavenly curtain are “printed all the generations of the world and all their deeds, whether done or to be done, till the last generation.” Thus, a just God foreordained all of human history for Israel and for the Gentiles as well. The chapter ends with a vision of “the Messiah the son of Joseph and his generation” and with wars which Gog and Magog will conduct with Israel in the days to come. In chapter 48, Metatron/Enoch shows Ishmael the vision of the hypostatized “right hand of God,” which God keeps behind since the destruction of the temple, and the vision of the future new terrestrial Jerusalem, which, according to other apocalyptic literature, will descend from heaven in messianic time. God then “will reveal his great arm in the world,” and “At once Israel will be saved from among the Gentiles, and the Messiah shall appear to them and bring them up to Jerusalem.” The age of the Messianic Kingdom will begin with a banquet in which all nations will participate.

There are many close connections between the so-called Gnostic and the Merkabah movement, which is also characterized as Jewish Gnosticism. Gnosticism, if considered as a separate, distinct movement, is rather an artificial creation of religious scholars. Its ideological premises were, however, distinct. P. Alexander, translator of 3 *Enoch*, aptly defined the major Gnostic ideas:

There are many variations in detail between the various Gnostic systems, but a typical system could speak of God as a transcendent, supreme power; of a second power (sometimes called the demiurge) that created the world; of a series of spheres (or aeons) separating men from the supreme power, each under the control of a hostile spirit (or archon); of the divinity of the human soul and its ascent to the supreme power; and of the secret knowledge (*gnōsis*) by which ascent is to be achieved.¹³

As we have seen, we find in the Jewish mystic literature of the ascent of Enoch all these Gnostic elements expressed in terms of Jewish folklore and tradition.

¹³ 3 (*Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch*), translation and introduction by P. Alexander, in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, p. 236.

The Psalms of Solomon

The collection of the *Psalms of Solomon* was written probably after 48 B.C.E. in a Pharisaic or Essene community in Jerusalem, identified in the text as the devout. It was originally written in Hebrew but is preserved in Greek translation in eleven manuscripts and in Syriac, in four manuscripts.¹⁴ These hymns were ascribed to Solomon because of the similarity between the most prominent hymn (*Pss. Sol.* 17) and the canonical Psalm 72, which was already ascribed to Solomon who, according to 1 Kings 4:32, was recognized as a poet. These manuscripts date from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries, but the work was mentioned in other writings or manuscripts dating from the sixth century. It is extensively quoted in *1 Baruch* (first century C.E.). Its ideas are derived from the previous Hebrew literature, in the Old Testament, and there is an abundant relationship between the Psalms and the Qumran literature. They use the same images and metaphors for the power of God, righteousness, and a similar description of the usurpers of the Jewish throne.

It was probably written under the influence of the new sociopolitical situation when the Hasmonaean Jewish dynasty was established. The eighteen Psalms describe how the group of native Sadducee rulers took over the Sanhedrin (*Pss. Sol.* 4:1), usurped power (17:6) in Jerusalem, and misused it by not honoring the ancient covenants (1:4–8; 2:3). As usual the political opponents are described as moral evildoers (4:3–13). Also we find some appeal for social justice – a condemnation of the excessive wealth that is equated with sin, whereas moderate wealth is equated with righteousness and a blessing coming from God (5:16–17). The denounced leaders were, however, overthrown by a foreign invader (“a man alien to our race”) who came from the west and at first was welcomed by part of the government and the people (8:16–17; 17:7). He found resistance in the temple, and after bringing reinforcements, the invader occupied the sanctuary and took the king and his children away (to Rome) (8:18–21; 17:7–9). Seeing the foreign soldiers trampling on the temple ground, thus desecrating it, pious Jews interpreted it as a breaching of the covenant with God and his punishment for the sins of the Jews (2:7; 8:22–25). The invader afterward left Jerusalem, went to Egypt where he was assassinated and his body lay on the beach (2:26–27). This description fits the Roman general Pompey who took Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E. and died assassinated in 48 B.C.E. Pompey interfered in the internal struggle for power between two brothers, the high priests, Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Psalms of Solomon*, translation and introduction by R. B. Wright, in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, pp. 639–670.

¹⁵ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, translated by John Dryden, revised by Arthur Hugh Clough (New York: Modern Library, no date), pp. 739–801. Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 14.2–4.

The group of pious Jews (“full of righteousness,” *Pss. Sol.* 1:2), distressed by the situation, called for an open rebellion against foreign domination and, at the same time, sought a rational explanation for it and a final solution to the problem of divine justice. The righteous Jews suffered individually and as a nation at the hands of the Gentiles who were lawless and rejected by God (17:11–14). But they suffered also by actions from fellow Jews, identified as “sinners,” who neglected the proper rites in the sanctuary (1:8; 8:11–13; 17:5–6). They were characterized by the psalmist thus: “The king was a criminal and the judge disobedient; [and] the people sinners” (17:20). This called for theological deliberations and explanations. They tried to “justify” God’s action and show that he was right (2:16–18; 3:5; 4:8; 8:7, 26; 9:2). As usual, afflictions are considered God’s punishment for transgressions, because even the righteous must have done something wrong (9:1). But, at the same time, the Gentiles exceeded their commission as God’s avengers (2:22–24). The psalmist expresses the idea that through God’s punishment a man may be cleansed of his sins (10:1–3) and may even anticipate the message of John the Baptist from the Gospel:

The one who prepares [his] back for the whip shall be purified, for the Lord is good to those who endure discipline. For he will straighten the way of the righteous, and will not bend them by discipline; and the mercy of the Lord is upon those who truly love him. (*Pss. Sol.* 10:2–3)

The final relief is found in the messianic expectations of God’s imminent Kingdom following the exilic and postexilic as well as the more recent Qumran tradition. The pious Jews expect that a legitimate Jewish king, “the son of David,” will appear who will expel the Gentiles from Israel and establish an independent Jewish kingdom. He will destroy the “unlawful nations” (17:21–24). He will purge Jerusalem and Israel from the Gentile foreigners until they come with gifts to serve the God of Israel and restore the Israelites in the Diaspora to their land (17:30–31). This king is the anointed “son of David,” a royal person but not superhuman, though “free from sin” (17:36). The psalms ignore the Danielic Son of Man eschatology and return to the Messianic Kingdom of the “son of David” eschatology of the prophets.

The *Psalms of Solomon* express the Jewish hope for a future and messianic ruler from the Davidic line, as promised by Isaiah, at the end of time. Appropriately, the judgment at the end of time deals with judging nations. The Davidic Messiah is charged with a mandate to purge Jerusalem of the Gentiles and to destroy the godless with his breath. Nations are kept captive under his rule and are destined to serve him. No foreigners are allowed to dwell in Jerusalem during that time. Eternal life in the blessed state refers to the existence of the righteous who are alive at the end of time. They enter it after judgment and the sinners are destroyed and “no memory of them will ever be found” (*Pss. Sol.* 17:44–45; 13:11). But it is not clear whether they will be condemned forever to the Underworld (Hades) or completely annihilated out of existence (15:10–13). The righteous of earlier times will remain dead.

There is no clear statement in the text about the resurrection. It can be only implied from the statements that the righteous “shall rise up to eternal life” (3:12; 13:11; 14:3–5). These expectations were not fulfilled; instead, the Hasmonaean dynasty was replaced by King Herod. But they allowed the revival of the ideal of the old prophetic eschatology. Resurrection was not an essential part here.

There are numerous parallels between the *Psalms of Solomon* and the Gospels. The righteous are called the “innocent lambs among sinners” (*Pss. Sol.* 8:23), and the devout one is admonished as “a beloved son” or God’s “firstborn” (*Pss. Sol.* 13:9; 18:4). The metaphor for the firstborn emphasizes the depth of God’s affection for the devout one and the people of Israel. The Messiah occurs in the psalms under the usual descriptions as belonging to the house of David (*Pss. Sol.* 17:4; Isa. 9:7; “my servant David,” Ezek. 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; Luke 1:69). But for the first time in Jewish literature they use the title for him as the “son of David” (*Pss. Sol.* 17:21), so frequently used in the Gospels (e.g., Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; Luke 18:38), and offer an innovation in the interpretation of the Messiah figure – namely, they classify him as the Lord Messiah (*Pss. Sol.* 17:32), which will be picked up by Paul (Rom. 16:18; 1 Cor. 1:2, 9; Phil. 2:11; Gal. 1:19) and by Luke in his Gospel (Luke 2:11) and used frequently in the New Testament as “Christ the Lord” (Χριστός κυρίου) (in Luke 2:11; and, in slightly different form, in Jn. 11:27; Acts 11:17, 2:36; Rom. 1:4; Rev. 11:15). The *Psalms of Solomon* represents the only occurrence of this title in Jewish literature. This title expands the understanding of the title Messiah, God’s anointed priest, prophet, or king, to the concept of lordship exercised on earth, though under God’s supremacy: “The Lord [God] himself is his king, the hope of the one who has a strong hope in God” (*Pss. Sol.* 17:34).

Apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra

The *Apocalypse of Baruch* (preserved in Syriac), also known as 2 (*Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*),¹⁶ and the *Apocalypse of Ezra* (also referred to as the *Fourth Book of Ezra*)¹⁷ were written after 70 C.E. under the impression of the destruction of Jerusalem. They are supposed to be revelations granted to Baruch, the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E., and to Ezra, at the time of the proclamation of the Law and the return to Jerusalem. They represent the theological ideas and

¹⁶ 2 (*Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*), a new translation and introduction by A. F. J. Kiln, in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, pp. 615–652.

¹⁷ *The Fourth Book of Ezra*, a new translation and introduction by B. M. Metzger, in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, pp. 517–559; 2 Esdras, in *The Holy Bible*, containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, New Revised Standard Version (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 248–281.

eschatology that were common knowledge in the first century; thus, they were held by the Scribes at the time of Paul and the Gospels. This also explains numerous parallels with other apocalyptic and New Testament writings.

A Syriac manuscript in Milan dated from the sixth to the ninth century is the only known source of 2 *Baruch*. To the text there is attached a letter to the tribes in the Diaspora in which Jews are commanded to trust God. It exists in thirty-six manuscripts. The Syriac version appears to be translated from the Greek, which is confirmed by a fragment found among the Oxyrhynchus papyri dated from the fourth or fifth century. Philological studies, however, point to Hebrew as the original language and Palestine as the place of origin. One passage was probably quoted by *Barnabas*.¹⁸

The apocalypse begins with the message that Baruch, a secretary to the prophet Jeremiah, receives from God, who complains about the deeds of the remaining two tribes of Judah after the others were taken to the Babylonian captivity. God reveals to him that the temple and Jerusalem will be destroyed for a while, but the world will not be forgotten, and Jerusalem will be restored forever, because the temple was already created before the world.¹⁹ The angels removed all of the contents from the temple to preserve them in heaven and destroyed the foundations of the city in order not to give the appearance that it was the Babylonians who destroyed it (chaps. 1–8).

Next Baruch (chaps. 9.1–12.4) fasts for seven days and sends a lamentation to God “because ... Zion has been destroyed.” Baruch again fasts for seven days and finds himself on Mount Zion and has a dialogue with God concerning the usefulness of being righteous. God explains that his nation, the Jews, was afflicted because it sinned, but was punished that it might be forgiven. He also predicts the punishment of other nations that are guilty because they “have used creation unrighteously.” But Baruch complains that he does not understand why God punished all of Zion on account of those who were unrighteous among them (chaps. 12.5–20.4).

In the following chapters 20.5 to 30.5 Baruch declares his prophecy concerning “the end of times” and the fate of those who sinned and of those who were righteous. And he justifies the coming of the end: “For if the end of all things had not been prepared, their beginning would have been senseless.” This idea will be emphasized by Paul (1 Cor. 16–19). God will finish what he has begun, and the end will be preceded by twelve signs – tribulations and torments over the whole earth such as “commotions” or earthquakes, the slaughtering of the great, “the drawing of the sword” or wars, famine and drought, terror, fire, the appearance of ghosts and demons, injustice, and unchastity. These are

¹⁸ 2 *Baruch* 61:7, quoted in *Barnabas* 11:9.

¹⁹ *Testament of Levi* 5; *Wisdom* 9:8; *Heb.* 8:5, where the tent of Moses was a prototype of the celestial temple. There was a long tradition in Jewish literature of a temple in heaven.

the usual disasters that will be repeated in other apocalypses, in the book of Revelations, and in the Gospels. After the fulfillment of the tribulations, the Anointed One (Messiah) will appear and the earth will produce abundance. The Anointed One is presented, however, as “returning with glory” to heaven, and the resurrection of those who are dead and their judgment will follow.

Having revealed the events of the end of times, Baruch goes to the people and warns them of the incoming disasters, resurrection, and the renewal of creation (chaps. 31.1–34.1). This is reminiscent of the renewal of the world in *1 Enoch* (chap. 72.1).

Next (chaps. 35.1–43.3), Baruch goes to the ruins of the Holy of Holies and has a second vision of a forest in a valley surrounded by mountains. The forest and mountains are leveled and then appears a cedar, which is burned down too; then a fountain will appear, vines grow, and the whole valley becomes filled with flowers. The meaning of these visions is that the great kingdom that destroyed Zion will be destroyed, followed by three more powers that will meet the same fate (presumably Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome). Afterward, the Anointed One, who is like a fountain and the vine, will reveal himself. He will be like a warrior because he will kill the last king and protect God’s people “until the world of corruption has ended.” Thus, his role is limited. But the believers, that is, those who live according to the Law and those who converted to the Law, will be rewarded, and those who despised or cast away the Law will suffer the opposite.

In the next chapters, 44.1 to 46.7, Baruch speaks to the people, reminding them of the last judgment when the new world will be given to those who preserved the truth of the Law and all others will be condemned to fire. In the following prayer (chaps. 47.1–48.50), he expresses his conviction that God determines everything. Next he asks God about the appearance of those who will be living after the resurrection, what will be their splendor, will they be changed and perhaps the world too (chaps. 49.1–52.7)? Those who despised the Law will acquire “horrible shapes,” whereas those who were righteous will be changed “into the splendor of angels”; they will be like angels and equal to the stars. Moreover, their excellence will be greater than that of the angels. We find these images in Paul (1 Cor. 35–54) and in the Gospels (Matt. 17:2; Luke 20:36).

Next, Baruch describes his third vision concerning a cloud from which alternately dark and bright water flows (chaps. 53.1–74.4). There are twelve of these flows, twelve alternate black and bright waters that represent events in the history of the Jewish nation, some bad, some good, with the last waters representing the tribulations at the end of time and the coming ideal Kingdom of God. The tribulations will involve “confusion of the spirit,” “rule of the despised over the honorable,” wars between nations, earthquakes, conflagrations, and famine. Then, the Anointed One will come and will judge all nations – all those which subjected Israel or ruled over it will be delivered to the sword; others

will be spared. Following this, he will establish an ideal Kingdom and will sit on the throne when “joy will be revealed and rest will appear”:

Judgment, condemnations, contentions, revenges, blood, passions, zeal, hate, and all such things will go into condemnation since they will be uprooted. For these are the things that have filled this earth with evil.

These images will be repeated over and over again in the New Testament writings. At the end (chaps. 75.1–77.26), Baruch thanks God and, speaking to the people, admonishes them, stating that, because of those who sinned, the righteous ones were subjected to domination over them by Israel’s enemies.

The apocalypse ends with a letter (chaps. 78.1–87.1) to “the nine and a half tribes” of the Diaspora exhorting them to obey the commandments of God and to trust him. The end as he prepared for them is near, and so is the fulfillment of his judgment.

In its eschatology, 2 *Baruch* predicts tribulations before the end of the age after which the Messiah will appear. The end of the age will come as a completion of God’s plans. One of these tribulations will be the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as multiple horrors and disasters that will cover the whole earth. Before the judgment, the righteous who are dead (asleep) in the earth will be resurrected in a new form with new transformed bodies resembling the angels. They will be judged with the others according to their deeds and the records of the books “in which are written the sins of all those who have sinned.” The righteous ones will be more excellent than the angels and will inherit all the blessedness of the new world. All the sinners will be given to torment in the fire. The Anointed One will execute the last ruler on earth and will judge and destroy all nations that were enemies of Israel. Afterward there will be great abundance and prosperity on earth.

God is presented as the creator and ruler on earth. Those who do not follow his commandments will be punished, but the righteous ones will be rewarded. Israel is treated as a chosen nation from among others. But because of this, God demands more from Israel than from other nations. Therefore, the sins of Israel will be punished through the destruction of the temple and the Diaspora. Those from among Israelites who mixed themselves with other nations will be rejected; those who lived according to the Law will take part in the resurrection and will live on the new earth.

The Law that was given through Moses established a covenant and will last forever. It has to be learned and scrutinized through human wisdom. Following the Law guarantees eternal life. Other nations rejected God, and though they may live happily, they are used by God for his purpose in temporary punishment of Israel. Eventually all nations will be subjected to Israel.

The world was created for man. But because of Adam’s sin, the creation is subject to corruption, and life is a struggle. But the world in its current form has only a temporary existence, because it will be renewed.

The extended *Apocalypse of Ezra* combines, in addition to the Jewish *Fourth Book of Ezra* (chapters 3–14), two additional Christian works traditionally differentiated as *2 Esdras* (chapters 1–2) and *5 Esdras* (chapters 15–16). Also it is listed in the English Bibles under the apocrypha as *2 Esdras*. The work exists in four Latin manuscripts dating from the ninth to the eleventh centuries, and *Fourth Ezra* in several Oriental manuscripts in Syriac and Ethiopic. There are also free elaborations of the text in Armenian and Arabic, and fragments in Coptic, Georgian, and Greek. It is suggested that the current Latin version was translated from the Greek text but the original language was most probably Hebrew. It is inferred from the internal evidence that the book was written about 100 C.E. in Palestine. The book subsequently was translated into Greek, and in the middle of the second century the four additional chapters (chaps. 1–2 and 15–16) were added by the unknown Christian writers.

The text opens with the genealogy of the prophet Ezra, who lived in the fourth century B.C.E., and how he was commanded by God to declare iniquities and evil deeds of Jews against God, in spite of the covenant and many benefits God bestowed upon them (chap. 1.1–23). These reproaches resemble those mentioned by the Letter to the Hebrews (8:10), Matthew (23:37), and Luke (13:34). Because Israel had forsaken God, he now turns to other nations and will cast the Jews out of his presence (chap. 1.24–40). Ezra continues explaining that God scattered Jews among nations for not keeping his covenant. Now he will give to them the “kingdom of Jerusalem” and what he had prepared for Israel (chap. 2.1–14, reminiscent of Matt. 25:34). Next follows an exhortation to do good deeds addressed to the church (chap. 2.15–32) and a promise of rewards after the resurrection similar to Revelations 22:2.

Ezra received a command to go to Israel, but he was rejected by the Jews. So he turned to the Gentiles and preached to them the advent of the one “who will come at the end of the age” and the rewards of the coming heavenly Kingdom for those “who have fulfilled the law of the Lord” (chap. 2.33–41) (Rev. 21:23; 22:5; 3:4; 6:11).

Next, Ezra was granted a vision on Mount Zion of a multitude of people who confessed the name of God, each of them receiving a crown on their head and palm branches in their hands (Rev. 7:9) from “the Son of God, whom they confessed to the world” (chap. 2.42–48).

After this Christian introduction follows the Jewish apocalyptic part, the *Apocalypse of Ezra* proper or the *Fourth Book of Ezra* (chaps. 3–14). These chapters contain the seven visions by Salathiel, also called Ezra in Babylon. Salathiel is the Greek for Shealtiel, who is presented as the father of Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:2; 5:2; Neh. 12:1), rebuilders of the temple and Jerusalem after the return from Babylon.

In the first vision (chaps. 3.1–5.20), Ezra in Babylon laments the fate of his people by recapitulating their history, the origin of sin, and the history of mankind as presented in the biblical texts. Then he asks questions concerning the suffering of Israel and why Israel was given over to godless tribes, why the

Law had been made to be of no effect, why Israel was punished when other nations are no better in their conduct. The angel Uriel is sent to him with the answers and explains that humans cannot comprehend the way of God (the Most High); the grain of evil seed was sown in Adam's heart from the beginning and produces ungodliness; the harvest of the rewards for the righteous ones, however, is approaching, but the required time has to pass and be fulfilled. The advent of the end of the age will be preceded by certain signs, such as an increase in unrighteousness, desolation of the land, great terror (Matt. 24:1-12), the sun shining at night, the moon during the day, blood dripping from wood, stone uttering a voice (Luke 19:40), and the stars falling.

In the second vision (chaps. 5.21-6.34), Ezra reiterates his complaints about God's abandoning his own chosen people and then asks a question concerning the lot of those who had died before the end of the age. He is assured that they will be judged in the same way as those who are living at the beginning of the new age: "I shall liken my judgment to a circle; just as for those who are last there is no slowness, so for those who are first there is no haste." Moreover, everything was planned by God from the beginning to the end. Then there follows a list of signs showing the beginning of the end of the age. These are familiar signs known from the Old and New Testaments (Rev. 20:12; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thes. 4:16).

In the long third vision (chaps. 6.35-9.25), Ezra first recapitulates the story of creation, emphasizing that God created the world for Israel and that the other nations were "nothing," but they dominate over Israel now. He wants to know why and how long this will last. He gets an answer that the living have to pass through earthly experiences before "they can receive the things that have been reserved for them" (1 Cor. 2:9). Then follows a description of what will happen after the fulfillment of the events foretold by the signs. Everyone who will survive the tribulations will witness the coming of the Messiah, "my Son the Messiah," and rejoice in his presence for four hundred years. Afterward, the Son of God, the Messiah, will die and with him "all who draw human breath." The world will return to its primeval state for seven days, after which there will be the general resurrection. Then a judgment by God will follow according to deeds (Rev. 22:12), and the righteous ones will be sent to the delights of Paradise, the unrighteous to the furnace of Hell (Rev. 9:2; Matt. 13:42; Luke 16:23-31). It is interesting to learn that, after death, earth contains the body of the dead who are "asleep," but their souls are in some "chambers" that will release them during the resurrection. We also read that the spirits of the righteous ones return to their sources and have rest and joy in seven spiritual orders (chap. 7.88-99) (Matt. 13:43; 5:8; Rev. 22:4), whereas the souls of those who despised the Law wander about in spiritual torment, grieving in seven ways (chap. 7.78-87).

Ezra, seeing that the number of those who will perish is larger than those who are saved, has to struggle with the problem of the human condition, of

God's mercy and providence. It would be better if we were like the beasts, "for they do not look for a judgment, nor do they know of any torment or salvation promised to them after death." But the angel answers Ezra:

Those who dwell on earth shall be tormented, because, though they had understanding, they committed iniquity, and though they received the commandments they did not keep them, and though they obtained the Law they dealt unfaithfully with what they received. (chap. 7.70-72)

In his sense of compassion for others, Ezra is asking whether the righteous would be able to intercede on the Day of Judgment for the ungodly and entreat for them. The answer he gets is that during the judgment everyone will be responsible for his own righteousness or unrighteousness. The prayers done in the past by the prophets applied to a different age; in the new immortal age, "no one then will be able to have mercy on him who has been condemned in the judgment" (chap. 7.115). Ezra makes an appeal to God's mercy for Israel and its people. The vision ends with the reiteration of the signs, which will announce the last times. Interesting is a new factor by which people can be saved, not only on account of works but "on account of faith by which he has believed" (chap. 9.7). This point will be crucial for Paul's theology of salvation.

In the fourth vision (chaps. 9.26-10.59), Ezra describes a woman in deep mourning after the loss of her son, who suddenly is changed into a splendid city. The angel Uriel explains to Ezra the meaning of the vision as representing the heavenly Zion prepared for those who are destined for salvation in the last days (Rev. 21:9-21; Heb. 11:16).

The fifth vision (chaps. 11.1-12.51) is modeled on the vision in Daniel 7:1-28 and in an allegorical fashion illustrates the future course of history (Rev. 13:1-18). The eagle appearing from the sea is the fourth kingdom interpreted as the Roman Empire, whereas in Daniel the fourth kingdom symbolized the Macedonian Empire. The eagle is reproved for his unrighteousness, is burned, and disappears at the completion of ages, and his place is taken up by a new "beast," the lion, "rousing up out of the forest." We learn that the lion is interpreted as "the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David." This is again modeled on Daniel 7:13-14 and *I Enoch* 42:6-7; 62:71. The Messiah will judge the ungodly nations and will destroy them. But he will preserve the remnants of Israel and save them until the day of last judgment.

In the sixth vision (chap. 13. 1-58), Ezra describes a figure of a man appearing from the sea and moving with the "clouds of heaven." He sits on a mountain and, with a stream of fire from his mouth, annihilates the multitude of his enemy. The angel explains the vision: the figure coming from the sea is the Son of God, who was hidden by God during the ages and who will appear at the completion of all the signs shown to Ezra before. Many nations will come together and attempt to conquer him, but he will assemble the nations, reproach them for

their ungodliness with torture and torments, and ultimately destroy them. He will preserve the tribes of Israel and show the awaiting wonders.

The seventh vision (chap. 14.1–48) is an account of how Ezra received a commission from God to write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ninety-four books, of which twenty-four were to be made public and seventy were to be given to the wise.²⁰ He is advised to instruct living people, his contemporaries, but for future generations he will restore the Jewish scripture and the Law that were burned. Interesting is the reference to the fact that Ezra will be taken up from among men to heaven and will live with the Son of God and others who were similarly taken up until the end of time. Some oriental manuscripts end with reference to Ezra's being taken up to heaven.

The Christian form of the *Apocalypse of Ezra* contains two additional chapters, 15 and 16. They denounce the enemies of Israel, the sinners, the Roman Empire (Rev. 14:8; 17:4; 18:2–8), predict disasters, calamities, wars (1 Cor. 7:29–31; Matt. 24:7–8; Luke 21:10–11, 26; Rev. 14:20), and persecution of “the chosen people” (1 Pet. 1:6–7).

Eschatological Traditions of Baruch and Ezra

In the eschatology of the *Apocalypse of Baruch* and the *Apocalypse of Ezra*, we find attempts to bring into harmony the earlier prophetic and Danielic eschatology. It treats the Messianic Kingdom of the prophets as something temporary, which is to be replaced by the eternal Kingdom of God – the consummation of history. The partakers of this Messianic Kingdom are the elect of the final generation of mankind, who are alive at the end of time. The Messianic Kingdom is preceded by tribulations, and those who are destined for the Kingdom of God are preserved and still alive when the Messiah comes.

In the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, the tribulations will affect the whole world, but the inhabitants of the Holy Land as the elect will be spared, and judgment will be pronounced upon the living by the Messiah. Those of the foreign nations who never sinned against Israel will be left alive, merely subjugated to Israel, but all who have fought against Israel will be delivered to the sword (2 Bar. 72). This temporary Messianic Kingdom is located on earth, where the beasts will make themselves the servants of men and the soil will yield abundant fruit (2 Bar. 29, 73). At an unspecified time, this Messianic Kingdom will end, the Messiah will return to heaven (2 Bar. 30.1–4), and the general resurrection of the dead will take place (2 Bar. 25.1–4). Those who were alive during the time of judgment will simply undergo transformation without dying. This theme will be taken up by Paul. The souls of the godless will be destroyed.

²⁰ These twenty-four represent the Hebrew canon: five books of the Law (Gen., Ex., Lev., Num., Deut.), eight books of the Prophets (Josh., Judg., 1 and 2 Sam., 1 and 2 Kings.; the latter prophets Isa., Jer., Ezek., and the Twelve), eleven books of writings (Ps., Prov., Job, Song, Ruth, Lam., Eccl., Esth., Dan., Ezra-Neh., 1 and 2 Chron.).

The *Apocalypse of Ezra* differs from the *Apocalypse of Baruch* in that it specifies that the Messianic Kingdom will last for four hundred (or one thousand) years, and afterward all will die, including the Son of God Messiah (“my Son the Messiah,” *4 Ezra* 7.26–33). In the Ethiopic and Arabic texts, the Messiah is described as “my Messiah,” in the Latin and Syriac versions as “my Son the Christ” (from the Greek Septuagint παῖς, which is a translation of the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ).²¹ After seven days will follow the general resurrection of all who had ever lived, including the Son [of God] Messiah, for the final judgment.

In both these *Apocalypses*, the Messianic Kingdom is represented as something in which the natural and the supernatural meet: “the end of that which is perishable and the beginning of that which is imperishable” (*2 Bar.* 79.2). The temporary earthly character prevails, because the partakers are still natural men and even beget children. Also, the Messiah in both *Apocalypses* has some supernatural character that differentiates him from the Messiah of the prophets. He is no longer thought of as born; he just appears. In the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, he comes from heaven and returns there. He is not designated as the scion of David or as the Son of Man. In the *Apocalypse of Ezra*, he is designated as the scion of the House of David and, at the same time, as the Son of Man (*4 Ezra* 12.32), who is caught out of the depth of heaven and from there appears to bring the Messianic Kingdom (*4 Ezra* 13.1–52). The solution to this problem of how the heavenly Messiah can be at the same time an earthly being and die is explained by Paul and described in the Gospels.

All those resurrected will rise in their former shape, and then the faithful are changed into beings whose glory is greater than that of the angels. The suffering that they have borne in the world for righteousness’ sake will earn them blessedness. The wicked are changed into revolting forms and will be given to eternal torment (*2 Bar.* 50–53). The survivors will be transformed as well.

This Kingdom of God is a consummation of the process of history and will last forever. But the new element here is that the elect, though they live through the Messianic Kingdom, will die in the pre-messianic tribulations exerted by God. This is connected with the idea of martyrdom developed after the insurrection of the Maccabees. In the Kingdom that will follow the resurrection of the dead, neither the Messiah nor the Son of Man has any role.

Participation in the Messianic Kingdom is, therefore, according to the *Apocalypse of Baruch* and *Ezra*, a privilege of the elect – those of the last generation of mankind who are kept safe through the tribulations and are alive at the appearance of the Messiah. After the Messianic Kingdom, they pass into a resurrected life and as such participate also in eternal blessedness. Two types of blessedness are thus conferred upon them – the messianic and the eternal

²¹ Bruno Violet, *Die Ezra-Apocalypse* (Leipzig, 1910), pt. I, pp. 140, 384; *The Fourth Book of Ezra*, p. 537, n. 7e.

(4 *Ezra* 13.14–24). Those of the elected who died in previous generations can attain only to eternal blessedness that begins after the resurrection of the dead. The righteous of the last generation must all pass through the pre-messianic tribulations. The *Apocalypse of Ezra* raises a question whether it is better to be among those who died earlier and experience neither the pre-messianic tribulations nor the Messianic Kingdom or whether the messianic glory outweighs the pains of the tribulations. The answer is that God, who on that day brings the tribulations, will preserve those who are subject to them if they have works and faith in him (4 *Ezra* 13.14–24). They experience not only the eternal but also the messianic blessedness.

According to both *Apocalypses*, the course of events is as follows: at the end of the epoch and before the fulfillment of time, there will be pre-messianic tribulations in which those who are elected to the Messianic Kingdom will remain alive. Afterward, there will appear the Messiah, and he will judge all the survivors, of which those who are considered not worthy of the Messianic Kingdom will be condemned to death. At the end of the Messianic Kingdom, the Messiah will return to heaven, and the resurrection of the dead of all generations will follow. Now God will pronounce the last judgment upon all, and those worthy will be destined to eternal bliss in the Kingdom of God, and the unworthy to eternal torment.

In the general scheme of events, there are two types of blessedness, messianic and eternal; two judgments, one of the Messiah, at the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom upon the survivors of the last generation, and the final judgment of God upon the whole human race risen from the dead after the Messianic Kingdom; and two Kingdoms, the temporary messianic and the eternal theocracy, the Kingdom of God.

What is characteristic of the theology of the Jewish scribes in the *Psalms of Solomon* and the *Apocalypses of Baruch* and *Ezra* is that they ignore the accounts of the demons and present angels as obedient servants of God. Only the angel of Death has a sinister office (2 *Bar.* 21.23). They also exclude the Jewish-Hellenistic conceptions of the personified powers, such as Wisdom and Spirit that assisted God in the creation of the world. In the *Apocalypse of Ezra*, God assures that he alone created the world and that he alone will judge the world (4 *Ezra* 5.56–6.6).

We may conclude this chapter with a statement that we observe through the Jewish writings a continuous theme of an apocalyptic and eschatological ruler who is chosen by God and acts on behalf of the righteous of God's people, Israel. These documents vary in his description and were written by Jews in periods of national historical disasters. The last apocalyptic literature, written at the troubled turn of the Common Era and inspired by earlier biblical tradition but also representing new messianic speculations, is especially important for the development of a new messianic movement that expressed hope for a new world under the control of the God of Israel. These messianic speculations

were diversified both in the Jewish communities and later in the Christian communities, but they offer no reason to think that, beyond the reconciliation of the Messiah to the figure of Jesus by Christians, Jewish and Christian ideas were very different from one another. Jewish ideas of the Messiah necessarily shaped those of Jesus' followers.

Development of the Hellenistic Christian Doctrine

FOUR PATTERNS OF MESSIANISM/“CHRISTIANITY”

Christianity, the religion as we know it today, evolved from various sources and underwent continuous transformation over the centuries. The term “Christianity” derives from the Greek rendition of the Hebrew term *messiah*; thus its meaning is the same as Messianism, a Jewish movement with eschatological expectation and which gave rise to the specific Jesus movement. There was no rigid demarcation at first between Judaism and the growing Jesus movement. We find the first use of the term “Christians” in Acts 11:26, and the separation of the members of the new Jesus movement from Judaism was not abrupt but a slow stepwise process at various periods in the Mediterranean region. In Palestine, the term “Nazarenes” was used for the earliest designation of members of the new movement. Hence it is difficult to talk about Christians and Christianity when referring to Paul and his activity or even to the period of the Jesus movement described in the Gospels. It seems more appropriate to differentiate various periods in the development of the religion by different descriptive specific terms.

The evolution of the Christian religion can be analyzed in four general patterns. First, it started as Jewish Messianism with the figure of a Messiah as a glorified man and an expected earthly Kingdom of God. This is the basic message of early Messianism, which goes back to the old Hebrew scripture and was prominent in the Qumran community.¹ It acquired Hellenistic elements, such as the mode of birth of a Messiah/Savior, and developed in the second half of the first century C.E. and the beginning of the second into Hellenistic Messianism with the Pauline and Gospel varieties. This stage represented the reformation movement within the old Judaism. Paul understood divinity in

¹ James H. Charlesworth, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Gerbern S. Oegema, eds., *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Tübingen: Paul Mohr Verlag, 1998).

the Hellenistic manner, and the Hebrew Son of Man was identified with the Hellenistic Savior, whereas the Gospels still operate with the Hebrew concept of divinity and a Messiah. Slowly, however, important changes took place in the development of the movement such that the adherents no longer could identify themselves with Judaism. These changes began to appear after the Jewish War of 66–74. Jewish religion itself underwent a significant transformation from a religion with a cultic center in the Jerusalem temple into a religion centered around synagogues and a scholarly academy in Jamnia (established ca. 90 C.E.) with rabbis replacing the priests and Sanhedrin of the temple. Thus, the surviving Pharisaic branch of Judaism was transformed into a rabbinic Judaism. The result of the transformation was now a sharper delineation of orthodox Judaism and an exclusion of all kinds of deviations from the established body of doctrines, including the sect of Messianists who were called Nazarenes. The twelfth of the traditional Eighteen Benedictions recited during the liturgy was changed circa 90 C.E. into: “For the renegades let there be no hope, and may ... the Nazarenes and heretics perish as in a moment; may they be blotted out of the book of life and not enrolled with the righteous.”² On the messianic side, Barnabas, one of the so-called apostolic fathers, in his letter from Alexandria (dated ca. 100–132) collected a number of prophecies, and by an allegorical reading of the Prophets and Jewish scripture, he attempted to demonstrate that the Jews missed them and that the Jesus Messianists now replaced the Jews as the elected people.³ The process of separation was completed during the Second Jewish War of 132–135. From now on, each of the two religions considered itself a true heir to the biblical tradition and considered the counterpart an apostasy.

This pattern of Messianism was revived in the doctrine of the Socinian church in the sixteenth century.⁴ But Socinians, by adopting a rational method in the eighteenth century, went much further in their analysis of scripture and religious matters, laying foundations for the Enlightenment and modern liberal religions, including Unitarian Universalism. It suffices to quote Joachim Stegmann Sr., who wrote:

Though the Holy Scripture is authoritative, its authority can be assessed exclusively by the judgment of our reason. Because of this the Holy Scripture cannot contradict reason, just as faith should not contradict reason. Indeed, faith follows the judgment of reason and believes that which reason judges worthy of belief.⁵

² C. K. Barrette, ed., *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (New York: Macmillan, 1957; revised edition, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), pp. 167, 211.

³ “The Epistle of Barnabas,” in *The Apostolic Fathers, Greek texts and English Translations*, edited and revised by Michael Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), pp. 270–327.

⁴ Marian Hillar, “Laelius and Faustus Socinus: Founders of Socinianism, Their Lives and Theology,” *Journal from the Radical Reformation: A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism* 10, no. 2 (2002): pt. I; 10, no. 3 (2002): pt. II.

⁵ Joachim Stegmann Sr., “De iudice et norma controversiarum fidei,” in *Myśl ariańska w Polsce XVII wieku. Antologia tekstów* (Arian Thought in Poland of the XVIIth Century: An

The second pattern began around the first half of the second century when the figure of the Savior Jesus was deified and Jewish Messianism changed into a Hellenistic triadic Christianity in its two forms. In one form, the Hebrew Messiah figure was transformed into the cosmic Greek Logos of Numenius (fl. ca. 150) (his doctrine will be described in detail in Chapter 6) by Justin Martyr (ca. 115–165) (Justin Martyr's doctrine is described in Chapters 5 and 6); and in the other form, the Gnostic form, the Logos is only one of many divine manifestations.⁶ Jewish society operated in a multicultural environment, and though it struggled for its ideological purity, it could not avoid being influenced by Hellenistic ideas. The educated Hellenes adhered mostly to one of the several philosophical schools such as Epicureanism, Platonism, or Stoicism,⁷ whereas the masses adhered to religious cults of the so-called Mystery religions of a Savior divinity or divine being (Mithras, Osiris, Attis, etc.).⁸

The Hellenistic influence on Judaism is epitomized by the writings of Philo of Alexandria. He developed further the philosophical concept of the Stoic Logos and identified it with the Platonic world of Ideas and made it into a cosmic divine power intermediary between the transcendent divinity and the world, and he fused it with traditional Jewish biblical themes. Thus, the Logos was identified with various forms of divine representations found in the Hebrew scriptures. In the Hebrew religion, the figure of a human and traditional Messiah, considered as a human Son of God, assumed gradually a more abstract and heavenly character. The preachers of the religious movement produced a broad range of apologetic, catechetical, and missionary writings. They were concerned with religious everyday practice and ritual.⁹

Anthology of Texts), edited by Zbigniew Ogonowski (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1991), pp. 293–294.

⁶ Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, translated by Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984); Jean Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics: An Introduction to the Gnostic Coptic Manuscripts Discovered at Chenoboskion* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1986); *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, James M. Robinson, general editor (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

⁷ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, translated by Horace C. P. McGregor, with an introduction by J. M. Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986).

⁸ Walter Burkitt, *Greek Religion*, translated by John Raffan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985; reprint of 1977 edition); David Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); E. A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973; reprint of 1911 edition), vols. 1–2; E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973; reprint of 1911 edition), vols. 1–2; E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead: The Papyrus of Ani* (New York: Dover Publications, 1967; reprint of 1895 edition); E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Heaven and Hell* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974; reprint of 1925 edition); Marvin W. Meyer, ed., *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook of Sacred Texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, translated by Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

⁹ *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, translated by Maxwell Staniforth, with introduction and new editorial material by Andrew Louth (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987).

Such a situation created problems in maintaining Jewish monotheism. In the third pattern, various approaches were developed to reconcile the Middle Platonic interpretation of divinity with monotheism by adopting the Egyptian triune doctrine in the first trinitarian interpretation by Tertullian (ca. 170–220), which tends to reemphasize the unitarian character of the divinity, while preserving the Greek triadic speculations (Tertullian’s doctrine is described in [Chapters 7 and 8](#)). It was first promulgated in a limited form by the Council of Nicaea of 325 and refined in a fully developed form of the trinitarian doctrine by Augustine (354–430).¹⁰ The doctrine was established by promulgation in a sequence of church councils: the First Council of Constantinople of 381, the Council of Chalcedon of 451, the Third Council of Toledo of 589, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, and the Council of Trent of 1546. The trinitarian synthesis, only for a variety of coincidental historical reasons, became the dominant doctrine. In the sixth century Emperor Justinian even incorporated explicitly the Catholic creed, including the doctrine of the Trinity, into Roman state law.¹¹

In the established understanding of the deity as the Trinity, the Christian Church admits:

The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the “mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God.” To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel’s faith before the Incarnation of God’s Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit.¹²

The church is aware that the Trinity is nowhere present in the New Testament, though the New Testament is concerned with the divine Father and Son, ideas that also include the Holy Spirit. But these concepts are squarely within the framework of the Hebrew theological doctrines of unitary monotheism. The church recognizes that this “doctrine of faith” was “articulated,” that is, developed over the centuries by the fathers of the church

who distinguish between theology (*theologia*) and economy (*oikonomia*). “Theology” refers to the mystery of God’s inmost life within the Blessed Trinity and “economy” to all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life. Through the *oikonomia* the *theologia* is revealed to us; but conversely, the *theologia* illuminates the whole *oikonomia*. God’s works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works. So it is, analogously, among human persons. A person discloses himself in his actions, and the better we know a person, the better we understand his actions.¹³

¹⁰ Augustine, *De Trinitate* 7.12, in Migne, PL 42.946.

¹¹ *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, editio stereotypa sexta. Volumen secundum, “*Codex Iustinianus*,” recognovit Paulus Krueger (Berolini: Apud Weidmannos, 1895).

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church, with modifications from the Editio typica* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), p. 237.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

This paragraph summarizes the church's understanding of the Trinity – the works of God can be explained by ascribing them to the three entities and, by analogy, to human actions that can be ascribed to the three persons. Yahweh was the Father and God, and he sent Jesus on a mission to perform the role of his sonship. But Yahweh acted with his spirit (*spiritus = pneuma = πνεῦμα = קָיָה*) among his followers and through Jesus. The problems arose when Jewish Messianism was fused with the Hellenistic worldview, when Jesus as Son of God was identified as fully Deity and as the preexisting Logos and the Greek mediator. At the same time the spirit of God that controlled the Hebrew prophets now controls the Christian activists. Such ideas had to be reconciled with the Hebrew concept of the unity of the Godhead.¹⁴

The modern Catholic catechism, and I take it as a paradigm of orthodox Christian faith, formulates the dogma of the Trinity in terms of an elaboration of various church councils:¹⁵

The Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the “consubstantial Trinity.” The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God whole and entire: “The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e., by nature one God.” In the words of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215): “Each of the persons is that supreme reality, viz., the divine substance, essence or nature.”

The divine persons are really distinct from one another. God is one but not solitary. “Father,” “Son,” “Holy Spirit” are not simply names designating modalities of the divine being, for they are really distinct from one another: “He is not the Father who is the Son, nor is the Son he who is the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit he who is the Father or the Son.” They are distinct from one another in their relation of origin: “It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.” The divine Unity is triune.

The divine persons are relative to one another. Because it does not divide the divine unity, the real distinction of the persons from one another resides solely in the relationships which relate them to one another: “In the relational names of the persons the Father is related to the Son, the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to both. While they are called three persons in view of their relations, we believe in one nature or substance.” Indeed “everything (in them) is one where there is no opposition of relationship.” “Because of that unity the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and is wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son.”¹⁶

¹⁴ H. P. Owen, *Christian Theism* (Edinburgh: Allen & Unwin, 1984); C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

¹⁵ Council of Nicaea (325); Council of Constantinople (381); Council of Chalcedon (451); Council of Toledo III (589); Council of Toledo VI (638); Council of Toledo XI (675); Lateran Council IV (1215); Council of Florence (1439); Council of Florence (1442).

¹⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pp. 253, 254, 255.

There is one point in the traditional formulation of the Trinity overlooked by the church – if there is one substance as was postulated by Tertullian, shared by the three “persons,” then the Trinity is a “quaternity.”

In the fourth and final pattern, Servetian unitarian Christianity interprets the divinity and its manifestations as a historical, modalistic process. This pattern found its modern expression in the so-called process theology of which Servetus was a precursor.¹⁷

MESSIANIC MOVEMENT IN PALESTINE OF THE FIRST CENTURY

The sociopolitical situation of Palestine under foreign domination in the first century led to an intensification of traditional Jewish messianic expectations and originated a political armed resistance to the Roman invader as well as a religious movement. The Jews asked, Why do the righteous continue to suffer and the wicked prosper in a world governed by the one true and just God?

There was, however, no grand design in the movement; it arose naturally within small groups in search of new social forms and vision. It arose against a background of Jewish mythical themes and adjusted its views on history from the Jewish eschatological perspective and became organized in communities, some of which were established by Paul. Josephus describes in his *Jewish War* many such episodes in Galilee when various religious leaders led a political uprising.¹⁸

The whole messianic movement has to be analyzed from two perspectives: one is the active participation in the revolutionary process defending the politicoreligious integrity of the nation; and the other, the ideological outlook, which is expressed in the religious writings and practice. The Jewish messianic movement in Galilee had its ideological roots in Jewish scriptural tradition, in speculations of Jewish groups like that of the Qumran Essenes, and led to new eschatological writings. The Jewish messianic movement in Galilee had two goals: first, the moral and social renewal of Jews afflicted by the political disasters in their country, which was dominated by foreign invaders, a situation that they interpreted as divine punishment for their

¹⁷ Marian Hillar, *The Case of Michael Servetus (1511–1553) – The Turning Point in the Struggle for Freedom of Conscience* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997); Marian Hillar with Claire Allen, *Michael Servetus: Intellectual Giant, Humanist, and Martyr* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002); Marian Hillar, “Process Theology and Process Thought in the Writings of Michael Servetus,” *A Journal from the Radical Reformation: A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 30–38.

¹⁸ Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works*, translated by William Whiston, foreword by William Sanford (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981). Literature on the origin of Christianity is extremely vast and often contradictory. We will list here only two recent publications: John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989); Étienne Nodet and Justin Taylor, *The Origin of Christianity: An Exploration* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998).

ritualistic and moral transgressions; and, second, the recovery of political independence, which, when combined with moral renewal, was expressed in the hope for attainment of a mythical eschatological ideal Jewish state labeled in religious and traditional terms as the Kingdom of God.¹⁹ This Kingdom of God was to be the actual kingdom of Israel in earthly Palestine presided by an exalted but human king or even by three prominent figures: the Messiah King, the Messiah Priest, and the Messiah Prophet.²⁰ The Kingdom of God was sometimes anticipated during the lifetime of the believers and would be the result of a political process aided by divine intervention.

This social and religious trend was a product of the current situation of the Jews, in a new multiethnic and multicultural milieu and their politicoreligious traditions, and it was strongly antiestablishment. The political hopes were best expressed in the form of a doctrine of the second *parousia* (second coming) of the Jewish Messiah combined with the teaching of a theology of atonement sacrifice in accordance with the traditional messianic doctrines of the Jewish prophets – the doctrine of passive suffering and day of atonement (Isa. 53:4, 6, 9).²¹

These eschatological expectations, which have their roots in the biblical prophecies, were continued in the writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls and apocalyptic literature of the first century.²² The Gospels, canonical as well as all others, and the writings of Paul constitute a midrash to the Hebrew Bible. Jews expected certain eschatological events and considered them predicted in the scripture (Ps. 2:1–9; 2 Sam. 7:12–16; Ps. 89:3–4, 27–37; 132:11–12). They then created the stories based on those predictions and fashioned a figure of the Messiah modeled on them and applied it probably to some actual

¹⁹ George Wesley Buchanan, *Jesus the King and His Kingdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), pp. 11–41. There is some indication that the original moral message propounded by the messianic movement may have been inspired by Buddhist influence either directly through the training of the leaders with the Buddhist Therapeutae in Egypt or indirectly through exposure to the Buddhist ideas imported to Palestine and preserved by the Essenes. Holger Kersten, *Jesus Lived in India: His Unknown Life Before and After the Crucifixion* (Rockport, MA: Element Books, 1994); Elmar R. Gruber and Holger Kersten, *The Original Jesus: The Buddhist Sources of Christianity* (Rockport, MA: Element Books, 1995); Z. P. Thundy, *Buddha and Christ* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).

²⁰ The royal, Davidic Messiah, the Priest Messiah, the Prophet Messiah. Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 86–87.

²¹ Buchanan, *Jesus*, pp. 251, 313.

²² *Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, edited by Florentino García Martínez and Eobert J. C. Tigchelaar, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997, 1998; reprint 2000). *Book of Enoch*, dated from ca. 160–70 B.C.E., continues the eschatology of the book of Daniel. Its chapters XXXVII–LXXI portray the revelations concerning the times of the end. The *Psalms of Solomon*, written shortly before 63 B.C.E. The *Apocalypse of Baruch* and the *Apocalypse of Ezra*, or the *Fourth Book of Ezra*, written ca. 70 C.E. In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985), vols. 1, 2.

revolutionary insurrectionist in first-century Palestine,²³ but not without some Hellenistic influence.

Among the first who undertook preaching the fulfillment of cosmic history central to Jewish mythology and the coming of the Kingdom of the Messiah, not only to the Hebrews but also to the Gentiles, was Paul or the author hiding behind this name. It seems that Paul, well versed in Hellenistic culture, traditions, and current religions, realized the limitations of the tribal character of the Jewish religion. The Law with its circumcision and specific regulations was a “stumbling block” in gaining acceptance by the Gentiles. Because he expected the coming of the Jewish *eschaton*, which, as having a cosmic nature, had to be universal, Paul conceived an idea of uniting the Jewish concepts of the Messiah with the Hellenistic concepts of the Savior (represented in that culture by Mithras, Osiris, Attis, Heracles, etc.).²⁴ Just as Philo of Alexandria interpreted the Hebrew Pentateuch using the Hellenistic concepts, so Paul interpreted the Jewish concept of the Messiah using Hellenistic Savior religion. Paul’s Messianism is based on the eschatology developed by the Scribes in the *Psalms of Solomon*, the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, and *Apocalypse of Ezra*, but he modifies them by inventing a mechanism by which the elect who lived together with the rest of mankind in a natural way could be participants in the transient Messianic Kingdom, and by this he understood that they would already have the resurrection mode of existence.²⁵ He found such ideas in the Hellenistic mystery religions with which he certainly was acquainted. In them the divinity dies and is resurrected or is “born again,” and by imitating the process in a ritual, the believers are also “reborn” and assimilated into the deity.²⁶ Thus, his Messianism was a result of a clash of two cultures – the theocratic, exclusive, repressive, and strongly nationalistic Jewish culture and the open, universalistic culture of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It represented an attempt at the reformation of the rigid Jewish system, based on animal sacrifices and legal rules, and at making it accessible to the Hellenistic people. The process, however, went beyond Paul’s expectations and led to the fusion of the two cultures on a more profound level. This was facilitated by the fact that Hellenistic philosophers developed very sophisticated speculations concerning the divinity that were

²³ Buchanan, *Jesus*; Luigi Cascioli, *La favola di Cristo. Libro Denuncia. Irrefutabile dimostrazione della non esistenza di Gesù* (Viterbo: Quatrini, 2005).

²⁴ Marvin W. Meyer, ed., *The Ancient Mysteries: A Sourcebook of Sacred Texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

²⁵ Marian Hillar, “The Logos and Its Function in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria. Greek Interpretation of the Hebrew Thought and Foundations of Christianity,” parts I and II, *A Journal from the Radical Reformation: A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 22–37; 7, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 36–53; Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul*, translated by William Montgomery with prefatory note by F. C. Burkitt (London: A. & C. Black, 1913); Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters* (London: A. & C. Black, 1912).

²⁶ Richard Reitzenstein, *Die Hellenistischen Mysterien Religionen. Ihre Grudgedanken und Wirkungen* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1910, 1927).

first adopted by Philo of Alexandria and, when combined subsequently with the Greek religious concept of the mediator-savior, could be easily adapted to the monotheism of the Jews.

THE ORIGIN OF “CHRISTIANITY” ACCORDING TO THE
EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS

The study of the origin of Christianity poses a problem for Christian researchers – they tend to look for its beginning in the orthodox form known to us after the Council of Nicaea. Nothing could be more misleading. Early “Christianity” was a Jewish messianic movement propagated by many sects with strictly Jewish theological doctrines – especially the monotheistic, unitarian concept of God and the Jewish concept of a Messiah. This concept, however, was undergoing modifications from an earthly political figure into a more abstract and angelic/spiritual figure under the influence of Hellenistic philosophy and religion. Therefore, at its very early stage it would have been considered a Jewish messianic sect. In fact, Epiphanius (ca. 310–402), bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, in his book *The Panarion* (written ca. 375) writes:

At that time all Christians were called Nazoraeans although for a short time they were called Jessaeans before the disciples began to be called Christians at Antioch. I think that they were called Jessaeans because of Jesse, since David was from Jesse, and from David through successive generations came Mary, the sacred scripture being fulfilled where in the Old Testament the Lord says to David: “The fruit of your loins I will set upon your throne.”²⁷

Epiphanius interprets the meaning of this messianic prophecy as the incarnation of the “royal dignity” in Jesus Christ and in “the chief of high priests, James,” the brother of Jesus. He speculates that James was Joseph’s son from his first marriage and a Nazarite (= the man under the vow), the firstborn, who took vows and was consecrated. James exercised the priesthood according to the old Law and, as attested by Eusebius following Hegesippus,²⁸ was permitted to enter the temple, the Holy of Holies.

We face here immediately different traditions concerning the historical Jesus. Namely, that Jesus would be a half brother of the high priest James, and he might himself be a high priest too. The book of Acts mentions that the messianic movement began to expand among the temple priests, that “a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Moreover, there

²⁷ Epiphanius, *The Panarion*, selected passages translated by Philip R. Amidon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 29.1–9.

²⁸ Ibid., 78.14.1. Eusebius in his *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (hereafter *H.E.*), translated with an introduction by G. A. Williamson (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), quotes Clement, II.1 and Hegesippus, II.23. Flavius Josephus, in his *Jewish Antiquities* 20.9, describes the death of James and several others by stoning as ordered by the high priest Ananus for “breaking the law” in the year 62 C.E.

is no independent identification of the James of Josephus with the James of the Gospels. It seems that the writers of the Gospel stories placed their myth in the historical context of the first century, picking up here and there historical names and events and adapting them to their story. A certain historical James, probably an Essene and opponent to the clerical establishment of Jerusalem, reported by Jewish historian Josephus,²⁹ was identified and adopted as the Gospel's James. If the Gospel's James was a historical person and was killed as described by Christian historian Eusebius, this would be indicated in Acts. But there is no reference to it there.³⁰ The other problem we face here is the genealogy of Jesus. Epiphanius is mistaken, because both genealogies found in the Gospels (Matt. 1:1–16; Luke 3:23–38), which are quite different, refer to Joseph and not to Mary.

Epiphanius further explains the term “Jessaeans” as derived either from Jesse or from Jesus himself (since “Jesus” = Yeshua, and this term means in Hebrew “healer,” “physician,” or “savior”) and links the Jessaeans with the group of Jewish Therapeutae in the region of Lake Mareotis as described by Philo of Alexandria. Like Eusebius, he takes the Therapeutae to be early “Christians.”³¹ They certainly were not Christians; they were most probably a group belonging to the Essene sect, who called themselves, among other things, “healers” because of their practice of medicine. As for the term “Nazoraean,” Epiphanius explains:

When therefore they were called Jessaeans for a short time after the ascension of the Savior when Mark was preaching in Egypt, certain others went off as well at that time, supposedly as followers of the apostles, I mean those referred to here by me as Nazoraean. They were of Jewish stock and held to the law and were circumcised.... Having heard only the name of Jesus and seen the divine signs occurring through the hands of the apostles, they also believed in Jesus. They knew that he had been conceived in the womb in Nazareth, had grown up in Joseph's house, and for this reason was called in the gospel “Jesus the Nazoraean,” as the apostles say, “Jesus the Nazoraean, a man accredited by signs and wonders” (Acts 2:22). So they applied the name to themselves and called themselves the Nazoraean.³²

Epiphanius goes on to explain that the Nazoraean accepted the books of the Old and the New Testament, followed the old Jewish Law regarding circumcision, the Sabbath, and the rest; they acknowledged one God and Jesus as the Messiah (Christ) and his son. He could not say, however, if

²⁹ Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.9.1.

³⁰ Marian Hillar, “Flavius Josephus and His Testimony Concerning the Historical Jesus,” *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism*, American Humanist Association, Washington, DC, 13 (2005): 66–103.

³¹ Philo of Alexandria, *The Contemplative Life, The Giants, and Selections*, translation and introduction by David Winston, preface by John Dillon (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981). Quoted by Eusebius, *H.E.* 2.17; Epiphanius, *The Panarion* 29.5.1.

³² Epiphanius, *The Panarion* 29.5.4.

they acknowledged Christ only as human as did the other Jewish messianic (Christian) sects of Cerinthus (or Merinthus) and the Ebionites,³³ or if “he was born of Mary through the Holy Spirit.” The sect began in the region of Peraea and Bashan and was hated by the orthodox Jews. The sect, according to him, had the complete Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew as it was originally written.

Ephianus repeated the misconception in the Gospels of the name Nazoraean (Nazoraioi), linking it with the village of Nazareth (Nazaret). Matthew mentions a prophecy that the Messiah “will be called a Nazorean” (Matt. 2:23) reinterpreting the statement from Isaiah 7:14, which refers to King Ahaz and his wife. There is no trace of such a prophecy in Jewish literature. Moreover, that village does not figure in the Old Testament. He most probably applied the play on words from the book of Judges 13:5 “he shall be a nazirite” and linked it with the village Nazareth.

The term Nazoraean was originally added to the name of Jesus/Yeshua (Savior) and may be linked to the word Nozrim used later in rabbinic literature for Christians. The term was used for the early sect associated with Jesus/Yeshua (Acts 26:9). When Paul became a Messianist, he was also a member of the Nazoraean sect (Acts 24:5). The term survives to this day. Nazoraean may be ancestors of the members of the Mandaean sect who trace their religious ancestry to John the Baptist. The sect survived in the Near Eastern region and its members are known as Mandaean Sabians (the Baptized Who Possess Knowledge). The sect uses the ancient Semitic language of Aramaic origin, Mandic. Its name may derive from two words: “manda” or “madita” and “saba.” Scholars still argue about the meaning of “manda” as “dwelling,” “a dwelling of the spirit or god,” “madita” as “knowledge” and “saba” as one who is “baptized” or “immersed in water.”³⁴

The term Nazoraean may come from the Hebrew word Nozrei ha-Brit and means “keepers” or “observers of the Covenant” or other ritual, and it is the name of the community described in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which is also called by other names such as Bnei-Zadok (the sons of Zadok as figurative descendants of a legendary priest, Zadok), Zadokites or Zaddikim (the Righteous ones), Anshei Kodesh-Tamin (the Men of Perfect Holiness), Taminei-Derech (the Perfect of the Way), Ebionai-Chesed (the Poor Ones of Piety), or Osei ha-Torah (the Doers of the Torah). All these terms are a variation on the two themes of this sect: Chesed (חֶסֶד), which means “piety,” and includes the observance of the Jewish Law, and Zedek (צְדָקָה), which means “righteousness toward one’s

³³ Anti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen, *A Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heretics”* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005), *Cerinthus* by Matti Myllykoski, pp. 213–246; *Ebionites* by Sakari Häkkinen, pp. 247–278; *Nazarenes* by Petri Luomanen, pp. 279–314.

³⁴ Elizabeth Stephens Drower and Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Mandaeans of Iran and Iraq: Their Cults, Customs, Magic Legends, and Folklore* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002); Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *Mandaeans: Ancient Texts and Modern People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

fellow man.”³⁵ All pious, Jewish, and later messianic sects would be collectively known in Greek literature as “Essenes.” Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.E.–50 C.E.) also describes another ascetic sect in Syria as “Essenes,” writing:

Their name, in my opinion, though the form of the Greek is imprecise, is derived from the word ἁγιότης (*hagiotēs* = holiness), since they have become in the highest degree servants of God, not by sacrificing animals, but by deeming it right to render their minds holy.³⁶

However, since Philo named the members of the sect Therapeutae, as they were involved in the practice of medicine, which was considered in ancient times a part of a religious cult, the name Essenes may be derived also from the Aramaic “Asa” (plural “Asayya”), which means “healer,” “physician.” The function of the Hassidim and Asayya could be easily combined by the members of the sect.³⁷

In the Gospel tradition, Jesus/Yeshua was represented as a man with an exceptional message and office. He is explicitly called in the Greek manner the “Savior” (Σωτήρ) (Luke 2:11; Jn. 4:42). Such a belief survived for more than four centuries in the Jewish messianic sect of Ebionites and in several similar ones, such as the Ossenes (or Ossaeans from the term Osei ha-Torah = doers of the Torah) located beyond the Dead Sea, the Sampsenes (Sampsaeans = sun people, from the Aramaic word *shimsha* = “the sun”) or Elcesaeans (from the root = “hidden power”). Eusebius wrote about the Ebionites:

The adherents of what is known as the Ebionite “heresy” assert that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary, and regard Him as no more than a man. They insist also that the law ought to be kept more in the Jewish manner, as I mentioned earlier in this history.

They accepted Jesus as a Messiah who was an ordinary man, esteemed as “righteous through growth of character and a child of a normal union between a man and Mary.”³⁸ They insisted on the maintenance of circumcision, on keeping the Sabbath, the sacrificial system, and all other observances

³⁵ The etymology of Nazoraean (Ναζωραῖος) was originally explained by Alfred Loisy, *The Birth of the Christian Religion*, translated from the French by L. I. Jacks (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1948). Robert Eisenman made a connection between the Messianic sect described in the Qumran manuscripts and the Jesus sect. He suggested that Jesus’ brother James the Just was the Teacher of Righteousness and one of the twelve elders forming the governing body of the sect, represented in the Gospels as the twelve apostles. *Maccabees, Zadokites, Christians and Qumran: A New Hypothesis of Qumran Origins* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983); *James the Just in the Habakkuk “Peshar”* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986).

³⁶ Philo, *Hypothetica*, p. 249.

³⁷ John M. Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1984; reprint of 1979 edition), pp. 12, 55.

³⁸ Eusebius, *H. E.* 3.27; V.17.

prescribed by the letter of the Law.³⁹ We do not know whether they believed in the resurrection of Jesus as something that already happened or that it was something that would happen in the future when he will arise to lead the righteous in the New Jerusalem. It seems that the Ebionites before Paul represented the mainstream of the nascent Messianism, formed the Jerusalem community, and had a debate with Paul whether Gentiles could be admitted to the community (Acts 15:1–21). After the destruction of Jerusalem, they found themselves in conflict with the Gentile Messianists who originated from the school of Paul with a distorted message that Jesus was the angelic Savior whose purpose was to redeem the Gentiles and transform or reform Judaism.

Eusebius, however, mentions other groups of the same or similar sects that differed slightly; for example, some accepted the virgin birth of Jesus as due to the action of the Holy Spirit. Epiphanius describes them in more detail, saying that they had peculiar characteristics such as staying away from foreigners in order not to touch them, practiced ritual daily ablutions, were vegetarians, practiced baptism, and observed the ritual eucharist but with water only. They began in the same regions as the Nazoraeans, but after the capture of Jerusalem. They were joined by a certain prophet Elxai, who was also connected with another sect called the Ossenes located beyond the Dead Sea. This sect evolved into another called the Sampsenes (Sampsaeans) or Elcesaeans (from the root = “hidden power”). Some among these groups existed, according to Epiphanius, already before Christ, such as the Nasaraeans and Ossaeans; some were formed or evolved after.⁴⁰ Some believed that Christ was Adam, others believed that Christ was created before everything, being a spirit above the angels, and was allotted the world. Still others thought he came and appeared by putting on a body whenever he wanted, that he appeared recently as a man, was crucified, rose, and ascended into heaven.

Eusebius maintains that the Ebionites rejected the Epistles of Paul and called him a “renegade” from the Law. They used only the *Gospel of the*

³⁹ Tyrannius Rufinus (345–411), *A Commentary on the Apostolic Creed*, translated and annotated by J. N. D. Kelly (Westminster, MD: Newman Press; London: Longmans, Green, 1955), p. 74; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30; Irenaeus on Ebionites in *Adv. Haer.* I.22; Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 23; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, translated with introduction by Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 2.1; 5.61.

⁴⁰ Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.27; V.17; Allegro, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 120–136; Tyrannius Rufinus, *A Commentary on the Apostolic Creed*, p. 74; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30. Irenaeus on Ebionites in *Adv. Haer.* I.26, in St. Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against the Heresies*, translated and annotated by Dominic J. Unger with further revisions by John J. Dillon, vol. 1, bk. I (New York: Pauline Press, 1992), in *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 55. Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* XXXIII.5, in *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*, Pars I, *Corpus Christianorum*, series IV, vol. I. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.1; 5:61.

Hebrews. Epiphanius says they used the Gospel of Matthew, which they called the *Gospel according to the Hebrews (or Hebrew Gospel)*; however, it was different from the canonical Gospel of Matthew known to Epiphanius.⁴¹ They also had another gospel, used by other similar sects, and which more explicitly explained the provenance of Christ as “adopted” by God, Jesus being a normal man born from a man and woman. Among other books they used, Epiphanius mentions the *Acts of the Apostles*, *Ascent of James*, and the *Itinerary of Peter* by Clement of Rome. They also attempted to “denigrate” Paul, for example, by saying that he was a pagan, with a pagan mother and father. They claimed that Paul became a proselyte because he wanted to marry the priest’s daughter. He was rejected, however, and turned against circumcision, the Sabbath, and the Law. This antagonism between the original Jewish Messianists following the Law represented by James the Just and Cerinthus and the innovators represented by Paul, is echoed in the New Testament writings.⁴² It was Tertullian who invented a heresiarch, Ebion, to account for their name, Ebionites, which simply means “poor,” and reflects the honorable title claimed by the primitive Jerusalem community.⁴³ They themselves derived their name from their way of life as beggars and the renunciators of material things. There was a bewildering number of groups of the “primitive Messianists/Christians” who survived the fall of Jerusalem and who existed into the second and third centuries.⁴⁴

No divinity or supernaturalism was attributable to the Messiah in orthodox Jewish expectation:

[The Messiah was] a truly pre-eminent man, to the extent that the Jewish imagination could picture him: he was supreme in strength and heroism; he was also supreme in moral qualities. A great personality, which is incomparably higher and stronger than ordinary people, a personality to which all very willingly make themselves subject and which can overcome all things, but for these very reasons feeling a very strong sense of obligation – this is the pre-eminent man of Judaism. Of a pre-eminent man like this it is possible to say, “Thou hast made him a little lower than

⁴¹ *The Gospel of the Nazaraeans, The Gospel of the Ebionites, The Gospel of the Hebrews*, in Wilhelm Scheemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, translated from the German by R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge and Louisville, KY: James Clarke and Westminster John Knox Press, 1991–1992), vol. 1, pp. 153–178.

⁴² Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.16.6–9. Robert Eisenman developed an interesting hypothesis identifying the “Righteous Teacher” of the Qumran scrolls with James the Just and the “Man of Lying” with Paul in *Maccabees, Zadokites, Christians and Qumran*. James the Just was described by his supporters in the Jerusalem Church as “zealous for the Law” (Acts 21:21).

⁴³ Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2.10. Eusebius disclaims the Irenaeus claim in *H.E.* 3.27.

⁴⁴ Robert E. van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

God.” For from a pre-eminent man like this to God is but a step. But this step Judaism did not take.⁴⁵

Such is the understanding of the person of the Savior (Yeshua) or Jesus in Paul’s Epistles which represent the earliest messianic writings of the New Testament and in the Gospels. The name Christian does not appear there and the communities of the followers of Paul are simply called “saints,” which means “holy” and “separate” from the rest, the same name as was used by the members of the Qumran community. And Paul, the Jewish scribe and learned scholar in Jewish theological literature, derived his figure of Yeshua from the latest Jewish apocalyptic and eschatological literature already influenced by Zoroastrianism and by Hellenistic thought.⁴⁶ We find in this literature a highly developed demonology, the origin of demons as the progeny of the angels who rebelled and “daughters of men,” the original concept of Satan as the “accuser” of men, the concept of evil as originating from demons, the eschatological doctrine of redemption and resurrection, and a doctrine of predestination and salvation by faith. The central concept for the understanding of the development of the Messianist/“Christian” movement is the idea of a Jewish Messiah. Expressions found in this literature describing the Messiah represent a variety of traditions: he is described as the “Servant of the Lord,” “The Righteous,” “The Chosen,” “The Son of Man,” “My Son” (i.e., the Son of God).

It was not a unique Jewish concept because many other religions and philosophical systems had a figure of an expected mediator between the deity and mankind. Thus, the final Christian idea was a fusion of a variety of trends and concepts. In the Jewish context in which Paul operated, we can differentiate several traditions which were already discussed in [Chapter 3](#).

In the first century the evolving Messianism encountered the Greek philosophical concept of *logos*, which from the noetic element of the universe was transformed into an intermediate being between the deity and finite man. The Greeks in their religion and popular Orphic and Dionysiac cults were expecting a Savior as a mythical expression of this concept. In the cultural and religious atmosphere of the first centuries, it was easy to identify the Jewish Messiah, translated into Greek as *christos*, with the Greek *logos*, and thus the Jewish eschatological Messianism became equipped with the Greek philosophical worldview, and, as such, was then spread to the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel from Its Beginning to Completion of the Mishnah*, translated from the 3rd Hebrew edition by W. F. Stinespring (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 24.

⁴⁶ *Book of Enoch*, dated from ca. 160–70 B.C.E., which continues the eschatology of the book of Daniel. See note 22.

⁴⁷ John Dillon, “Logos and Trinity: Pattern of Platonist Influence on Early Christianity,” in *The Philosophy in Christianity*, edited by Godfrey Vesey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) pp. 1–13; Hillar, “The Logos and Its Function in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria,” parts I and II.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL

The Fourth Gospel,⁴⁸ the work ascribed to John, was used by Christian Apologists and theologians as a proof text for trinitarian doctrine and the divinity of Jesus. Thousands of pages were written for the analysis of the Gospel, and such claims cannot be justified. Nevertheless the Gospel is filled with varieties of apparent ambiguities and contradictions that present ideological interpretive tensions, masterfully analyzed by a recent study of Paul N. Anderson.⁴⁹ Modern studies of the Gospel reveal that it is not the authentic work of an eyewitness, but its author or authors were dialectical, creative theologians subscribing to basic agency Christology and handled perceptively all earlier Jewish tradition, adapting it to the new situation.⁵⁰ John's theology is a creative, living Christology, which is still being explored and formulated and not an established set of theological tenets.

Philological analysis suggests that the Gospel was redacted at least two times. The first time based on some oral source in the Johannine community, probably circa 80–85 c.e. The dating, however, should not be taken as sure, because all dating related to the story of Jesus and early Christianity is circular, based on testimony of the documents, which themselves need to be verified. It is suggested that the Johannine, pre-Markan, and Q traditions interacted.⁵¹ Thus, this John's Gospel would be the second originally written Gospel after the Gospel of Mark (suggested ca. 70 c.e.). The author of the first redaction seems to be the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn. 21:7, 20) as reported by the second redactor (Jn. 21:24). This community leader or leaders relocated after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 to a place in Asia Minor, probably Antioch, and continued preaching. The Gospel was written in its final form at the turn of the

⁴⁸ Ehrman, *The New Testament*, pp. 133–153; Stephen L. Harris, *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009), pp. 215–241.

⁴⁹ Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*, with a new introduction, outlines, and epilogue (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), p. 27.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 29, 65; Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*, New Testament Supplement (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965); Peder Borgen, *Logos Was the True Light – and Other Essays on the Gospel of John* (Trondheim: Tapir, 1983); C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1978); C. K. Barrett, *Essays on John* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982); J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

⁵¹ Anderson presented a diagram showing the influential interaction between these traditions (Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, p. lxxiii). Johannine and pre-Markan traditions are supposed to influence each other, and the Johannine tradition influenced the Q and Lukan traditions. After the second redaction of John's Gospel, continued preaching of John was influenced mutually by the Matthew tradition and led to the formulation of John's three Epistles. Finally, the successor of John produced the final edition of the Gospel, which became now the Fourth Gospel.

century, perhaps in Antioch, where Bishop Ignatius could reinterpret it later in the Hellenistic manner.

The sociohistorical analysis of the Gospel of John itself illustrates the process of development of the Messianist community and of its doctrines. The Gospel documents this evolution of the community in its several layers of stories, which reflect the process.⁵² The internal evidence of the Gospel indicates that the community originated in a Jewish synagogue, somewhere in Palestine (perhaps even in Jerusalem), where a group of Jews accepted the faith in the person of Jesus, as an exceptional human being, Son of Man, who was considered a rabbi, Jewish teacher, “a Lamb of God,” “Savior of the world,” and a Jewish “Messiah” or future deliverer of the people of Israel as a representative of God and empowered by God to perform miracles as signs of his glory (the story of Nathanael, Jn. 1:43–48; wedding in Cana, Jn. 2:1–11; cleansing of the temple, Jn. 2:13–17; the story of a Samaritan woman, Jn. 4:16–19; healing of a son of the official in Capernaum, Jn. 4:46–54; curing of a paralyzed man in Jerusalem during a Sabbath, Jn. 5:2–15; multiplying of bread

⁵² Raymund E. Brown suggested that the Johannine community developed in four stages. In the first pre-Gospel stage, the Jewish Messianists worshiped in the synagogue believing in and expecting a Jewish Davidic Messiah. The problem arose in the second stage when the anti-Davidic and anti-temple Samaritan converts entered the community and catalyzed the development of high preexistence Christology, which threatened Jewish monotheism. Samaritans maintained that Moses preexisted personally; therefore, the Messianists who believed that Jesus was the prophet greater than Moses would assume his preexistence. They actually believed in two Gods, which would explain why there are two different accounts of creation in Genesis and that Moses in Exodus 34 met with two beings called Yahweh. Yet they were monotheists by arguing that one God was incarnated in the other one. The other doctrine with which the Johannine community was faced was the application of the Jewish apostate angelology found in 3 *Enoch* and *Testament of Daniel* (6:1) to Jesus, making an angel out of him. Such a view will be largely spread among Christian apologists. This probably led to the expulsion of the Messianists from the synagogue and formation of a Johannine community composed of Jewish Christians and Gentile converts subscribing to the popular teachings of Philo. This resulted in assimilation of more Hellenistic ways of describing the exalted Messiah and docetizing tendencies generally classified by the scholars as Gnostic. During this stage the Gospel was written in its first redaction, and also the Epistles of John were written. In the First Epistle, the author is concerned with the faith of the believers and the numerical growth of the secessionists (1 Jn. 4:1–6; 2:22–25; 2 Jn. 7–10). In the next, third stage, to counteract these Gnostic tendencies within the Christian community, the last redactor added a prologue (Jn. 1:1–5) and the additional passages: John 1:6–18, chapter 6, John 11:1–46, John 12:9–11, chapters 15–17, and John 21:1–23. These additions add several new themes and emphasize the humanity of Jesus, the real Son of God. The last, or fourth, stage represents dissolution of the community when secessionists moved during the second century toward docetism, Gnosticism, Cerinthianism. This would also explain, according to Brown, why the Fourth Gospel was more frequently cited by the heterodox writers. John Macdonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964); Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciples: The Life, Loves and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

loaves and fish, Jn. 6:1–14; walking on water, Jn. 6:16–22; teaching in the temple though he was not taught, Jn. 7:14–15; curing the blind from birth, Jn. 9:1–12; raising Lazarus from the dead, Jn. 11:17–44). These signs were supposed to attest to the truthfulness of his special status and mission in order to convince the community to believe in him.

John states that Jesus as a Jewish Messiah was predicted by Moses and the prophets (Jn. 1:45) in direct reference to Deuteronomy 18:15–22 and Isaiah 40:3. He was baptized by John the Baptist with the Holy Spirit and became appointed the Jewish Son of God (Jn. 1:34). All this happened in accordance with the prophecy of Malachi about the advent of the eschatological “day of the Lord” preceded by the return of the prophet Elijah (Mal. 4:5).

Those Jewish Messianists in the Johannine community continued to worship in the synagogue; however, with time they developed attempts at proselytizing other members of the Jewish synagogue, found resistance, and eventually were excluded from the community. Their view of a Messiah did not correspond to that of the Jewish tradition, which expected a powerful figure of a ruler and king who would overthrow the dominion of invading Rome and renew the Davidic kingdom in Jerusalem. Echo of such a view can be seen in the passage when Nathanael addresses Jesus, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (Jn. 1:49). Another instance attesting to the same situation is an attempt by the crowd to make Jesus king (Jn. 6:15) or when Jesus came to Jerusalem greeted by the crowd as the king of Israel (Jn. 12:13) as predicted by Zechariah in the Hebrew scripture (Zech. 9:9). This prophesied figure was supposed to be a triumphant king who would deliver Israel and bring peace to nations and establish his dominion in the world.

The story in the Gospel about Jesus healing a blind man on the Sabbath reveals the opposition of the Jews: “His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue” (Jn. 9:22; also Jn. 12:42).⁵³ Jesus predicts in the Gospel that his followers will be cast out of the synagogues (Jn. 16:2). Moreover, those who will do this will think that they would be worshipping God. But the followers were divided as to the issue of Jesus being a Messiah (Jn. 7:40–42). The Gospel, as well as the Synoptic Gospels, clearly indicate that the cause of Jesus’ death at the hands of the Romans was instigated by the Jewish political activity (Jn. 19:12). The Romans were concerned with the political situation in Palestine and would repress any national opposition. The Jews themselves were not unified on the issue of national resistance as we know from Josephus. All this is clearly visible in the stories about Jesus’ arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection.

⁵³ Modern interpreters of the Gospel attempt to read into the text of the Gospel twentieth-century anti-Semitism. See Adele Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

Only later, after the failure of the Jesus movement, did Jewish apologists write making references to the presumed fulfillment of prophecies pronounced by the Jewish prophets and scripture (Jn. 19:24), bringing to the fore the moral and eschatological message of the revolutionary leader, switching the paradigm from the eschatological-political orientation to the eschatological-moral orientation. There is a hint of this situation when John says that Jesus “did not say all those things from the beginning” (Jn. 16:4, 5–11).

Evidently synagogues started expelling the Jesus Messianists from their communities by the second half of the first century eventually changing the twelfth of the eighteen Benedictions. It is possible that at this moment the leader or leaders of the community transferred to Asia Minor, to Antioch or other towns, organizing a new community. Moreover, the story of Nicodemus and subsequent comments (Jn. 3:1–21) illustrate the change in the understanding of the story of Jesus, who becomes now a “Son of Man” who descended from heaven and is described as the one who has already ascended to heaven, possibly a heavenly figure to rule the earth as described in Jewish eschatological literature (Jn. 3:11–16).

Jesus is depicted as testifying that one has to be reborn spiritually, “from above,” “born of water and the spirit” in order to be able to enter into the Kingdom of God (Jewish *eschaton*). Next follows further modification of the view about Jesus, who is described by John as the “only Son of God” and with whom “light has come into the world.” He is now more than an exceptional man; he becomes a heavenly figure whose task is to deliver a message from God, to “speak the words of God” (Jn. 3:34) so that those who believe in him will not perish but will have eternal life (Jn. 15–16; 3:35–36) after the general resurrection in accordance with the Hebrew eschatology. These are references to imminent Jewish eschatological expectations, which were very vivid in the troubled first century amid the Jewish society. We have described these expectations in [Chapter 3](#).

Because the group was rejected by the larger Jewish community, its members now turned against it, condemning those who do not accept the testimony of the group for whom Jesus was the representative of God. His message was interpreted as focused on heavenly things, whereas the rest of the Jews were focused on earthly things and stood in “darkness” and their deeds were considered evil (Jn. 3:31–36). It seems that the Johannine community acquired new members from the Gentiles who did not speak Aramaic, and this is reflected in the need to translate Aramaic or Hebrew terms such as Rabbi (Teacher, Jn. 1:38), Messiah (Anointed, Jn. 1:41), Cephas (Peter = rock, Jn. 1:42), pool of Siloam (sent, Jn. 9:7), Gabbatha (Stone Pavement, Jn. 19:13), Golgotha (Place of the Skull, Jn. 19:17). Also the author feels that it is necessary to explain to the Gentile reader what was the interaction between the Jews and the Samaritans (Jn. 4:9) (though in some manuscripts this sentence is lacking). The Gospel develops further the idea that Jesus is the “Savior of the world” (Jn. 4:42) and elaborates on the theme of expected eschatological resurrection

and judgment, and on Jesus' having the power granted from his Father to "give life to whomever he wishes" and to execute judgment (Jn. 5:20–30). Jesus is represented as the Son of God, calling God his own Father, therefore representing himself as almost equal to God. Jews could easily accuse him of ditheism and even attempt to kill him (Jn. 5:18; 7:1). Anyone who sees the Son sees the Father, and anyone who honors the Son honors the Father. The Father sent the Son, and the works (miracles) the Son performs in the name of the Father testify about his truthfulness (Jn. 5:17–38; 6:41–51; 12:44–50). But Jesus is presented as explicitly emphasizing that nothing he did was based on his own power, nor was he even teaching on his own (Jn. 7:16).

In the later parts of the Gospel, there are elaborations on the earlier stories about Jesus and his interaction with the Pharisaic Jews in the temple and his teaching. In the early part we do not know what his teaching was. The emphasis in the Gospel is not on the Jewish *eschaton* but on believing in Jesus and thus becoming "children of God" (Jn. 1:12–13). Only at the end of the Gospel does the author quote Jesus saying, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 15:12). We get, from Jesus' conversations with the Pharisees, an idea that he is represented as someone who was before Abraham (Jn. 8:58) and, even more, that he is reported to have said, "The Father and I are one." And, answering to the charge of blasphemy, Jesus replies:

Is it not written in your law, "I said, you are gods"? If those to whom the word of God came were called "gods" – and the scripture cannot be annulled – can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, "I am God's Son"? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. (Jn. 10:34–38)

The same is repeated later in John 14:10–11. Jesus makes here reference to Psalm 82:6–7:

I say, "You are gods [ἐγὼ εἶπα θεοὶ ἐστε], children of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like mortals, and fall like any prince."

Those special figures in the Hebrew scripture who were enlightened by the "word of God" (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ) were called "gods," that is, godlike, so the more so can Jesus, who does the works of God and was "sent into the world," be called the "Son of God." The same applies to the confession of Thomas (Jn. 20:28). This does not mean that Jesus should be considered to be God but to be a special person like other exceptional figures in the Hebrew scripture. Statements such as "I am ..." and the prayer ascribed to Jesus, "Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world" (Jn. 17:24), are like the reference to Abraham, because both refer to the cosmic divine scheme (plan). They represent a metaphorical transfer to

Jesus of the revealing and saving work of Yahweh.⁵⁴ Jesus is an eschatological revealer in whom God reveals himself and his scheme of salvation to those who believe in him. These are references to the ideas found in the *I Book of Enoch* where the Son of Man was concealed in the presence of God before the creation of the world and was given a name. He was endowed with the spirit of wisdom and was the Elect One.

The last redactor of John added to his Gospel a prologue (Jn. 1:1–5), which seems to be a hymn, an invocation to Logos.⁵⁵ The insertion of the prologue was probably prompted by developments that took place in the Johannine community. After expulsion from the synagogue, Jewish Messianists acquired Gentile converts who were subscribing to the popular teaching of Philo of Alexandria. The community now was facing the Philonic interpretation of the current religious views, Jewish and Hellenistic, where the key figure was an intermediary between the divine being and humans. Philo introduced this intermediary by transforming and reinterpreting the Jewish concepts of Logos and Wisdom into an abstract angelic being, preexistent in God as the Son of God and sent down to earth to enlighten for human illumination. In Philonic doctrine there was no possibility of spiritual rebirth, whereas this was a necessary salvific function of Jesus (Jn. 3:3–5).

To counteract these Gnostic and Philonic tendencies in the messianic community the author of the Fourth Gospel chose to introduce a prologue in which he aims to demonstrate that Jesus is a human messenger and revealer and natural Son of God, being the embodiment of God's Logos, but not God himself.

We know from the report (written in 112 C.E.) of Pliny the Younger (61–113 C.E.), a Roman lawyer, priest, and senatorial representative of the emperor Trajan in Bithynia and Pontus, from more or less the same time when the Gospel was finalized, that Christians used to sing hymns to Christ “as if to a god.”⁵⁶ Previous chapters have already dealt with the linguistic problem of Philo of Alexandria associated with this invocation. Philo gives us an indication, and he is a first-century witness to the usage of the Greek language, that the expression of John 1:1, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, should be translated “In the beginning was the Word” (Jn. 1:1a), “and the Word was with God” (Jn. 1:1b), “and the Word was *divine*” (Jn. 1:1c).

⁵⁴ P. B. Harner, *The “I Am” of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Johannine Usage and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970).

⁵⁵ The reader may find an exhaustive analysis of the single verse of John 1:1 from various points of view (textual, lexical, grammatical, rhetorical, translation, form, source, redaction, and compositional criticism) in Garrett C. Kenney, *John 1:1 as Proof-text: Trinitarian or Unitarian?* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999). On the term Logos, E. J. Lovelady, *The Logos in John 1:1* (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1963).

⁵⁶ Pliny the Younger, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, translated with an introduction by Betty Radice (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1988), *Ep.* 96, p. 294.

All Greek manuscripts, except one, *Codex Regius* of the eighth century, agree that the word θεός in John 1:1c is anarthrous.⁵⁷

The term θεός derives from the Sanskrit term *dius*, which designates sun, fire, a ray of light, day, sky, and heaven. It gave rise to the term *diaus*, designating the generating power dwelling in heaven, hence Father of Light and Life. The Greek term θεός acquired broader meaning; thus it became necessary to use the definite article with the term in order to distinguish the one God, ὁ θεός.⁵⁸ In John's Gospel the term is used ninety-three times and refers clearly to the one God of Israel except in John 1:1c (already mentioned) and in John 10:34–35, where it refers to Psalm 82:6 with reference to the leaders of the Jewish nation, who are called “gods.” The Logos is not the Godhead, but the creative power of God, his agency, his mind, and the expressive word of God through which everything came into being. It is also the Old Testament Wisdom and a giver of eschatological life and instruction, because at the same time it continues to be “the true light that enlightens everyone” though affecting only the Johannine community. The purpose of the anonymous author or authors of the Gospel is to convince the reader through arguments and to inspire through the signs “to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (Jn. 20:31).

The reference to “In the beginning was the Word” is a direct allusion to Genesis 1:1, the moment of creation, and the Logos refers to God's activity, to the Hebrew *davar*, power, expressed in his pronouncement: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός and וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים (Then God said).

There are in the scriptures several close parallels to the verses “and the Word was with God” (Jn. 1:1b) and “He [i.e., Logos] was in the beginning with God” (Jn. 1:2):

Sirach 1:1: “All wisdom [σοφία] is from the Lord, and with him it remains forever.”

Sirach 24:3–4: “I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist. I dwelt in the highest heavens, and my throne was on a pillar of cloud.”

Sirach 24:9: “Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.”

Wisdom 9:9: “With you is wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world.”

⁵⁷ Reuben Swanson, *New Testament Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus* (Pasadena: William Carey International University, 1995).

⁵⁸ E. W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* (London: Bagster, 1877). The term θεός designates supreme reality of the universe conceived personally (as in Jewish mythology) or impersonally (as in Greek philosophy); the one true God of Israel; the deities of the Gentile religions; angels, intermediary beings, kings, heroes, great leaders in Greek and Jewish writings.

Proverbs 8:22–23: “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.”

In the Hebrew Bible and in the Jewish wisdom literature, which was certainly inspired by the Hellenistic and Near Eastern cultures, Wisdom was a metaphor for an expression of God’s intellect and its personification. The author of the Gospel followed here a broader interpretation of Philo’s biblical concept identifying the Logos as the source of Wisdom. Moreover, Wisdom is sent down to earth to illuminate and instruct those who seek it [her] (see Wis. 8:1–21; 10:1–21). Later, this function of Wisdom, distributed among humanity, will be described by Numenius as the Third God, equivalent to the trinitarian Holy Spirit.

Once Philo identified the Logos with Wisdom, he ran into a grammatical problem, for in the Greek language “wisdom” is feminine and “word” is masculine. Philo solved the problem by indicating that, though Wisdom’s name is feminine, her function and nature is masculine. Thus, he used the term “logos” instead of “wisdom” (σοφία). For Philo, the Logos (Wisdom) was an intermediary agency or God’s faculty between the transcendent creator and the material world.

This is well illustrated by his doctrine of creation. Though Philo’s model of creation comes from Plato’s *Timaeus*, the direct agent of creation is not God himself but the Logos. Philo believes that the Logos is “the man of God” (*Conf.* 41) or the shadow of God that was used as an instrument and a pattern of all creation (*LA* 3.96). The Logos converted unqualified, unshaped preexistent matter, which Philo describes as “destitute of arrangement, of quality, of animation, of distinctive character and full of disorder and confusion” (*Op.* 22), into four primordial elements “out of which this universe was made” (*Op.* 52).

God, according to Philo, did not begin to create the world at a certain moment, but he is “eternally applying himself to its creation” (*Prov.* 1.7; *Op.* 7; *Aet.* 83–84). Philo contends that God thinks simultaneously with his acting or creating. “For God while he spoke the word, did at the same moment create; nor did he allow anything to come between the Logos and the deed; and if one may advance a doctrine which is pretty nearly true, His Logos is His deed” (*Sacr.* 65; *Mos.* 1.283). God himself eternally creates the intelligible world of Ideas as his thoughts. The intelligible Forms are thus the principle of existence to the sensible things which are given their existence through them. This simply means in mystical terms that nothing exists or acts except God. On this ideal model, God then orders and shapes the formless matter through the agency of his Logos (*Her.* 134, 140) into the objects of the sensible world (*Op.* 19). Philo, being a strict monist, could not allow even for a self-existing void, so he makes its pattern an eternal idea in the divine mind.

Before Philo there was no explicit theory of creation *ex nihilo* ever postulated in Jewish or Greek traditions. Both Philo and Plato do not explain

how the reflections (εἰδωλα) of Forms are made in the world of senses. They do not attribute them to God or the Demiurge because it would be contrary to their conception of God as “good” and “desiring that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself.”⁵⁹ God could not create the copies of the Forms, which should be “disordered.” It seems then that the primordial unorganized matter was spontaneously produced on the pattern of the Ideas. The Logos would shape the elements from this preexistent matter, first into heavy (or dense) and light (or rare) elements that were differentiated properly into water and earth, and air and fire (*Her.* 134–140; 143). God could not, according to Philo’s philosophy, create the preexistent matter (*Her.* 160).

Logically, for Philo God is indirectly the source of preexistent matter but Philo does not ascribe to God even the shaping of matter directly. In fact this unorganized matter never existed because it was simultaneously ordered into organized matter – the four elements from which the world is made.

This model of creation and the role of the Logos is succinctly summarized in John 1:3, “All things came into being through him/it [i.e., logos], and without him/it [i.e., logos] not one thing came into being,” has a parallel in Wisdom 9:1–2, “O God of my ancestors and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by your word [ἐν λόγῳ σου] [*logos, davar*], and by your wisdom have formed humankind to have dominion over the creatures you have made,” and in Wisdom 11:17, “For your all-powerful hand, which created the world out of formless matter....” The Logos is the creative power of God and one of God’s attributes and thus is not created and a separate entity.

The next statements in John 1:4–5, “In him [i.e., logos] was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it,” and in John 1:9, “The true light, which enlightens everyone coming into the world,” are short references to Wisdom 1:6–7; 6:12–20 where Logos/Wisdom is “a kindly spirit” that enters human souls and is “the spirit of God that fills the world.” In the form of human wisdom, it is imparted to humans who “most sincerely desire instruction, and their concern for instruction is love of her [i.e., logos], and love of her [i.e., logos] is the keeping of her [i.e., logos’s] laws, and giving heed to her [i.e., logos’s] laws is assurance of immortality, and immortality brings one near God” through deserving eschatological resurrection, according to the Jewish doctrine.

The verses in John 1:10–13 are a theological elaboration on the significance of accepting a belief in the status of the embodied Logos by which act one becomes a “child of God.” The Gospel of the Kingdom is thus also called logos (Matt. 13:19).

The next verses in John 1:14–18 describe the cosmological and soteriological significance of the Logos. This Logos “became flesh,” that is, it became a human being, Jesus, who became “glorified” (“we have seen his glory”). The

⁵⁹ Plato, *Timaeus* 29.

Gospel indicates that this glorification came about also by Jesus' death and resurrection. As God's eschatological Logos, Jesus embodies the presence of God in the world (Shekinah) and calls for the world to respond to God's saving plan. Moreover, he was glorified as God's "only Son" ("as of the Father's only Son"). It is important to underline that only the human form, that is, Jesus, is considered "the Father's only Son" (Jn. 1:14) and not the Logos. The Logos is not one to one identical with the Son. From him, that is, from the human Jesus Messiah, we received "grace upon grace" and "truth." And finally, God is invisible and inaccessible to humans, but "It is the only Son" who is now resurrected (i.e., the resurrected Jesus) and with God "who has made him known" (Jn. 1:18). That means that God made himself known to us humans through his human Son. And this was still emphasized more in John 12:44-45: "Then Jesus cried aloud: 'Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.'"⁶⁰

There are several manuscript variations of the verse in John 1:18. The New Revised Standard Version states "It is God the only Son." Most manuscript versions have "It is the only Son." It seems that even using the New Revised Standard Version translation, one should use "divine" instead of "God." Jesus is not God, only a special human being. Nevertheless, the meaning of verse 18 is that we can know God only through the manifestation of his human Son, Jesus.

We do not know the origin of this prologue, but it sounds like a piece of liturgical literature firmly set into the Hebrew biblical context. Logos (the Hebrew דָּבָר *davar*) or Wisdom (the Hebrew חֵכְמָה *chokhmah*) was the metaphor for God's self-revelation, acting, and immanence in the world. As to the Jewish Messiah prophesied by Micah 5:2 (in the Hebrew and Septuagint versions), James Dunn, biblical scholar, commented: "In neither instance does the Hebrew suggest the idea of pre-existence ... it was not until Justin took it up in the middle of the second century AD that it began to be used as prophecy of Christ's pre-existence."⁶¹

The inclusion of the prologue in the Gospel's final version in the Greek-speaking Johannine community could have been inspired by opposition to the spreading Philonic religious-philosophical synthesis. In differing with Philo, John does not make Logos a preexisting Son of God, only the human Jesus; "Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth" (Jn. 1:45) is designated as the Son

⁶⁰ This theme was especially developed by Michael Servetus in his Christology: "God wanted to make Himself manifest to the world and to show an outward manifestation by means of this expression and this Word" (the expression is "God spoke"). Michael Servetus, *The Restoration of Christianity: An English Translation of Christianismi restitutio (1553)* by Michael Servetus (1511-1553), translated by Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), p. 70.

⁶¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), p. 71; J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p. 77.

of God in accordance with the Jewish practice. The Gospel does not know the stories of the virginal conception, the stories of the infancy of Jesus, and places Jesus' birth in Nazareth (Jn. 7:40–52). The Gospel suggests that the moment of embodiment took place at the baptism of Jesus (Jn. 1:14–15) when the spirit descended upon him and John the Baptist testified that Jesus is the “Son of God” (or, as in other manuscripts, “God’s chosen one” = ὁ ἐκλεκτός) (Jn. 1:33–34). Jesus becomes the Son of God by adoption or transformation through the divine power that descends upon him, and he becomes an instrument of revelation and salvation. In this way, Jesus could be called “god” because he would represent God functionally, but he would not be identical with God ontologically. Such a concept of functional identity is known in Judaism as the institution of שְׁלִיחַ (shaliach).⁶²

DEIFICATION OF JESUS AS LOGOS AND TRUE GOD

We find the first mention of Jesus' deification in the letters of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch,⁶³ which he wrote during the reign of Emperor Trajan sometime between 98 and 117 C.E. Several times he uses the expressions “Jesus Christ our God,” “through the blood of God,” “our God, Jesus the Christ,” and “Christ our God,” which leave no doubt that Jesus is considered a true God.⁶⁴ In his Christology he confesses that Jesus is truly of the family of David with respect to human descent and the Son of God with respect to the divine will and power. He was truly born of a virgin and was baptized by John. But Jesus is the Son of God not only as a human being but as God's Logos: “God revealed himself through Jesus Christ, his Son who is the Word (Logos) and who came forth from one Father and returned to the One,” and “Jesus Christ who came forth from one Father and remained with the One and returned to

⁶² A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982); Kenney, *John 1:1 as Prooftext*, p. 22; Adin Steinsaltz, ed., *Talmud* (New York: Random House, 1989).

⁶³ Antioch was a city on the Orontes River at the southern tip of today's Turkey located near the modern city of Antakya. The city was founded by Seleucus I Nicator, one of Alexander the Great's generals in the fourth century B.C.E. The city was named by Seleucus for a member of his family. The location was chosen by a religious ritual – eagle, the emblem of Zeus, was given a piece of ritual sacrificial meat and he carried it to the site of the future city. Seleucus built a great temple to the Pythian Apollo, and another sanctuary dedicated to Hecate was built underground by Diocletian. The population, which reached in early Roman times about 500,000, was a mixture of Jews and Hellenic people who spoke the Aramaic language in everyday life. The divinities, except Apollo and Daphne, were native Persian Artemis of Meroe and Atargalis of Hierapolis Bambyce. In 64 it passed to the Romans and became a free city. It was visited by Julius Cesar in 47 B.C.E., and Octavian erected there a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus. In the first century C.E. the city had a large Jewish population and attracted early Messianic missionaries of Jesus' followers (Acts 11:19; 11:22). And it was here that the Jesus followers were called for the first time “Christians” (Acts 11:26). Later it became one of the four patriarchates after Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Rome.

⁶⁴ *Eph.* pp. 137, 149; *Rom.* p. 167; *Smyr.* p. 185, all in Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

the One.”⁶⁵ These seem to be direct references to the prologue of the Fourth Gospel interpreted in a Hellenistic manner and explicit identification of Jesus as the Son of God and with the Logos of God. The Logos of God is not God’s attribute but his Son, who is prolated from the source and assumes human form. This identification of Jesus as the prolated Logos with God himself goes beyond the Philonic concept of the logos because Philo denied divinity to the Logos. This change in treatment of Jesus from the Gospels is also confirmed by Ignatius’s strong appeals to Christians to separate themselves from Judaizers who would deny the divinity of Jesus. Ignatius also opposed the schismatic docetists who, being influenced by the common Hellenistic view that matter was evil, would deny the reality of Jesus’ humanity.⁶⁶ Ignatius probably presided over the Messianist/Christian community in Antioch, which was dominated by the Gentile Messianists/Christians who now interpreted the Gospel in a Hellenistic way.

Another early document attesting to the deification of Jesus is the letter from Pliny the Younger. He, as a special representative of the emperor, wrote a letter from Bithynia in Asia Minor to Trajan in 112 asking the emperor how to treat Christians. He characterized Christians as people who honored Christ as God.⁶⁷

It seems that Messianists were persecuted in the early stages of Christianity’s development by the Romans for political reasons – they believed in the arrival of a Jewish Messiah who would deliver Israel from foreign domination.⁶⁸ Deification of the Messiah was thus a result of two tendencies: first, to accommodate the failure of the eschatological-political movement and, second, to find a new justification for maintaining hope alive by switching this orientation to the future and changing its character to one that was eschatological-moral. At the same time such a switch in the paradigm would allow church leaders to assume political leadership in the empire, thus replacing the leadership of the Hellenistic clergy.

Solutions to the Problem of God’s Unity

The prologue reflects the problem of applying *logos* to both Jesus and God. This problem arose in the second century and continued for about the first four centuries until the trinitarian doctrine was developed and accepted as the ruling one in Christendom. Several solutions were proposed in the writings of the early church fathers, such as Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Tatian, Tertullian, and Origen. They stayed close to the doctrine of Middle

⁶⁵ *Mag.* 8, 7, p. 155, in *ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Phil.* 3, 6, p. 179; *Smyr.* p. 185, both in *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Letters of the Younger Pliny*, Ep. 96; Ep. 97.

⁶⁸ Hillar, *The Case of Michael Servetus*, pp. 13–26.

Platonism or Philo⁶⁹ by attributing to the Son a beginning to his existence and not recognizing him as equal to the Father. Others tried to establish the true divinity of the Son as coeternal with the Father, declaring that he came from the substance of the Father and not from nothing as creatures do. Sometimes they denied that the Logos was subsequent to the Father; in other places they affirmed it. They were attached to Philo's distinction between *logos endiathetos* (inward Wisdom as Wisdom of God) and *logos proforikos* (outward or expressed Wisdom of God as in his agent) and spoke of the Logos as being subordinate to the Father (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian). Sometimes they suppressed the distinction between *logos endiathetos* (inward Wisdom) and *logos proforikos* (outward Wisdom) and included the Logos in the divine substance. Before the Nicaean Council and even later, Christians facing the Greek world did not have any fixed, established opinion regarding the "divinity" of Jesus. In 375 Epiphanius listed about nineteen sects having essentially antitrinitarian (unitarian) views. In most cases, the unity of substance of the Logos with the Father and the distinction of persons was considered a contradiction.

The fluidity of the views among Christians concerning Jesus is abundantly attested by Eusebius Pamphilus of Caesarea (263–339). In his *History of the Church*,⁷⁰ he quotes a book, *The Little Labyrinth*, by an unknown author who, in turn, himself quotes others describing the unitarian ideas as the original views on Jesus: "They [followers of Artemon] claim that all earlier generations, and the apostles themselves, received and taught things they say themselves, and that the true teaching was preserved until the time of Victor, the thirteenth bishop of Rome after Peter: from the time of his successor Zephyrinus the truth was deliberately perverted." Eusebius disclaims this by saying that the early writers such as Justin (100–165), Miltiades, Tatian (115–185), Clement of Alexandria (150–215), and Melito (115–185) claimed the godship of Christ. He claims also that the Gospels proclaimed the same! Then he claims that it was precisely "Victor [ca. 180–199] who excommunicated Theodotus [ca. 190], the shoemaker, the prime mover and father of this God-denying apostasy, when he became the first to declare that Christ was merely human." Asclepiadotus, Theodotus the banker, and Artemon are mentioned as the disciples of Theodotus the shoemaker and his followers. Eusebius attests further of a synod in the second century convened by Bishop Apollinarius of Hierapolis against the Montanists and Theodotus (fl. 140–190) in Phrygia at which Theodotus was accused of being antitrinitarian. *Libellus synodicus*, in a collection of notes on the synods compiled in the ninth century from ancient sources, mentions the synod of twenty-six bishops convened by Apollinarius that condemned

⁶⁹ Hillar, "The Logos and its Function in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria," parts I and II.

⁷⁰ *The Little Labyrinth*, in Eusebius of Caesarea (Euzebiusz z Cezarei), *Historja Kościelna. O Męczennikach Palestyńskich* (History of the Church: On Palestinian Martyrs), translated by Arkadiusz Lisiecki (Poznań: Księgarnia Uniwersytecka, 1924; reprint 1993).

Montanus, Maximilla, and Theodotus. It also mentions another synod of twelve bishops convened by Bishop Sotas of Anchialus in Thrace, condemning and convicting of heresy the shoemaker Theodotus, Montanus, and Maximilla. Both sources, Eusebius and the *Libellus synodicus*, agree. Both synods seem to happen before the persecution by Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180).⁷¹ The controversy reached a crisis at the end of the third century and reached its peak in the fourth century with the views spread by Arius (ca. 250 or 256–336),⁷² especially in the eastern part of the Roman Empire.

The Trinity: The Central Doctrine of Christianity

The orthodox catholic Christian concept of the unity of God in the Trinity was developed slowly as a result of a long process of mixing various ideologies.⁷³ The whole idea of the Trinity came about as a syncretic development from the clash of the Hebrew Unitarian concept of God; the Greek religious-philosophical concepts of the nature of God and the powers governing the world; the mixing of the Greek religious ideas about a Savior who acts as a mediator between God and humans with the Hebrew concept of the Messiah, who was presented and expected as a national liberator; and the Egyptian religious concept of the triune divinity.⁷⁴

The Roman Catholic Church maintained that the doctrine of the triune God was contained or at least implied in the scriptural texts of the Old and the New Testaments and that such was their message. The doctrine was established as a dominant one in the fourth century by combining it with a means of coercion in the form of state law and preventing any independent scholarly study of the sacred texts. It took the Reformation and Radical Reformation to initiate a painful and often bloodily repressed process of a reevaluation of the sacred texts and a return to their original meaning.

The acceptance of the trinitarian doctrine is based on human psychological conditioning. Even today, most Christians when facing the obvious scholarly arguments against the Trinity in the scripture, bluntly refuse to consider them because they feel a threat to their piety of belief in Jesus and the “Holy Spirit.” This concept reflects the presumed highest level of piety by ascribing to the Christ-Messiah all possible perfections we can humanly imagine, thus

⁷¹ Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.16; V.19; Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Christian Councils from the Original Documents to the Close of the Council of Nicaea A.D. 325*, translated from the German and edited by William R. Clark (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1894).

⁷² Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001); Hillar, *The Case of Michael Servetus*, pp. 26–36.

⁷³ Anthony F. Buzzard and Charles F. Hunting, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound* (San Francisco: Christian Universities Press, 1999); Buchanan, *Jesus*; John A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (London: SCM Press, 1985).

⁷⁴ Gwynn Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).

equating him ontologically with the divinity. However, this doctrine was never fully accepted, and its incendiary character was feared very early at the initial stages of the Reformation by Erasmus who wrote prophetically in the preface to the 1523 edition of *The Trinity* by the church father, Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 315–367):⁷⁵

The ancients philosophized very little about divine things. The curious subtlety of the Arians drove the orthodox to greater necessity.... Let the ancients be pardoned ... but what excuse is there for us, who raise so many curious, not to say impious, questions about matters far removed from our nature? We define so many things which may be left in ignorance or in doubt without loss of salvation. Is it not possible to have fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit without being able to explain philosophically the distinction between them and between the nativity of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit? If I believe the tradition that there are three of one nature, what is the use of labored disputation? If I do not believe, I shall not be persuaded by any human reasons.... You will not be damned if you do not know whether the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son has one or two beginnings, but you will not escape damnation, if you do not cultivate the fruits of the Spirit which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, long suffering, mercy, faith, modesty, continence, and chastity.... Many problems are now reserved for an ecumenical council. It would be better to defer questions of this sort to the time when, no longer in a glass darkly, we see God face to face.... Formerly, faith was in life rather than in the profession of creeds. Presently, necessity required that articles be drawn up, but only a few with apostolic sobriety.⁷⁶

The Old Testament and Unity of God

God in the Old Testament is one par excellence and has several names, but his proper name is Yahweh (Yehovah). He is a god with mixed characteristics: he is father to his own chosen people and one who made an eternal covenant with them; he is cruel and vengeful to the enemies of Israel; he is capricious in his mood and often acts immorally by our standards. God promised the Israelites eternal salvation in the form of a new earthly Israel and a new world (supernatural or ideal) introduced by a human Messiah. His name as a father is nothing new. We find it in many cultures, and it is associated with his function as a creator and protector of the nation, kings, and individual Israelites. Often his subjects are named his sons, often also the entire nation, and especially prominent figures such as kings and priests. God acts through his utterances,

⁷⁵ Saint Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, translated by Stephen McKenna (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954).

⁷⁶ Latin version is found in *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, reedited and revised by P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen (Oxonii in Typographeo Clarendomiano, 1924), vol. 5, no. 1334, 173–192; English version in Erasmus, *Collected Works* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 9:245–274; the quoted version in Roland Herbert Bainton, *Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511–1553* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953), pp. 33–34.

for example, the word (*davar, logos*), which may be considered his creative agent. Jews considered their history and the Law as a word revealed by Yahweh. Under the Greek influence, certain concepts such as Wisdom (*Sophía*) were introduced into Jewish writings. There are in Proverbs, in the Wisdom of Solomon, and in the Wisdom of Sirach vivid statements about Wisdom as the company of God, as an image of his goodness, as the firstborn before all creation, and the worker of all things. It is easy to envisage it as a person and an agent. At the same time, it is acting in humans as human wisdom. Jews did not consider it as a separate entity but rather as a divine attribute, God's activity, and often as the Jewish Law, which was considered to be preexistent. Nevertheless, the Apologists used it as evidence of the preexistence of the Word, and Arius as evidence that Christ was a created being.⁷⁷

As to the Spirit, in the Old Testament the word *ruach* originally meant "wind" and "breath." It was a general view in antiquity that breathing was associated with acquiring the vivifying power that animated living things. This was a good biological observation but could not be explained in rational, naturalistic terms before the discovery of oxygen and its role in metabolism. Because God was considered the life-giving power, the term designated the all-pervading presence of God and his substance. But the term acquired several other meanings and was used in expressing the spirit of Yahweh: as an action of God, his creative force; as his saving power; as the charismatic effect and imparted spirit or gift to kings, judges, and especially to the messianic king; as a power imparted to man and renewing him inwardly; and as an instrument illuminating the prophets and producing a special mood to understand the word of God and the strength to proclaim it. In the messianic age, this outpouring of spirit will especially affect all people. Though the spirit was described in personal terms, it is clear that the Jews and the writers of the Old Testament never regarded the spirit as a person. In these formulations there is no concept of an additional "person" or "entity" in God; thus there is no basis for the ontological entity called the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸

Though the Old Testament contains the term used for the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, "Nowhere in the Old Testament is there any solid evidence that a sacred writer viewed the Word of Yahweh as a personal being distinct from Yahweh himself and thus had intentions of plurality within the Godhead. The Word of Yahweh is only Yahweh acting, or the means by which he revealed his will to men."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ A. W. Wainwright, *The Trinity and the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1962), p. 34; J. Lebreton, *History of the Dogma of the Trinity*, translated by A. Thorold (New York, 1939), pp. 93–94.

⁷⁸ Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples*, introduction and translation by George Wesley Buchanan (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 53–55.

⁷⁹ Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia and London: Westminster of Philadelphia and Hutchinson of London, 1972), p. 5.

APPENDIX: FAILURE OF THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Extensive studies for the search of a historical Jesus failed.⁸⁰ According to Luke Timothy Johnson, these studies led nowhere because they reflect the pre-judgment and presuppositions of the authors and not real actual events.⁸¹ Earl Doherty, a historian and classical scholar, noticed that there is no mention in all the early writings of Christianity that “Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and the Son of God.” Thus, if Jesus were a real person and went through the vicissitudes ascribed to him in the Gospels, he certainly would be mentioned as a historical figure and originator of the religious message. After an analysis of all available literature, Doherty came to a conclusion:

It is important to realize that the many references in the epistles to the “death” or “rising” of Christ are not, in themselves, references to physical events on earth or in history. They, along with a handful of “human” sounding terms, are part of the *myth* of the Son; they relate to the activities of this divinity *in the supernatural realm*. For all its jarring incongruity with our modern outlook, not to mention centuries of tradition about a Gospel Jesus, this is a view that would have been perfectly at home in the philosophical and mythical thinking of the time. It was, in fact, a view shared by a whole range of pagan salvation cults, each of which had its own savior god who had performed deeds in the mythical world. Like Paul’s Christ, savior gods such as Attis and Osiris had been killed; like Paul’s Christ, Osiris had been buried (after being dismembered); like Christ on the third day, Adonis and Dionysos had been resurrected from death. All these things were not regarded as historical; they had taken place in the world of myth and higher reality.⁸²

Doherty summarized the results of his investigation in twelve points, “pieces of the Jesus puzzle”:

1. The story of Jesus of Nazareth related in the Gospels was not known to any of the Christian writers before the Gospels became written and widely distributed, that is, before 85–90 C.E.
2. There is no record of Jesus’ existence in non-Christian writings before the second century. References in Flavius Josephus are recognized by scholars as later Christian interpolations.⁸³ (Philo, who traveled to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the temple, would certainly mention

⁸⁰ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday; New Haven: Yale University Press, vol. 1, 1991; vol. 2, 1994; vol. 3, 2001; vol. 4, 2009).

⁸¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, “The Humanity of Jesus. What’s at Stake in the Quest for the Historical Jesus?” in John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson, and Werner H. Kelber, *The Jesus Controversy* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1999), pp. 53–54.

⁸² Earl Doherty, *The Jesus Puzzle: Did Christianity Begin with a Mythical Jesus?* (Ottawa: Canadian Humanist Publications, 2000), p. 16.

⁸³ Hillar, “Flavius Josephus and His Testimony Concerning the Historical Jesus,” pp. 66–103.

Jesus if he were a historical figure with such wide fame as is reported in the Gospels.)

3. The figure of Christ found in the early epistles such as in Paul and Hebrews is represented as a heavenly cosmic being revealed through the Hebrew scripture and not known from the revelation of the man Jesus. Paul received his revelation from the Spirit and not from any direct experience with a human Jesus.
4. Paul and early authors of the epistles place the death and resurrection of Christ in a supernatural realm. Their information derives not from historical events, but is deduced from Hebrew scripture.
5. The Christ of Paul operates within the Hellenistic worldview of the hierarchical cosmos.
6. The Christ of Paul's epistles shared many features with the "savior deities" of ancient "mystery cults" who had performed salvific acts.
7. Paul's heavenly Christ was modeled on the Hellenistic concept of the Greek Logos widespread in Philo's version and of Jewish Wisdom from the wisdom literature.
8. All the Gospels derive from a single basic story of Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospel of Mark. The Acts of the Apostles is a second-century text of mythmaking.
9. The Gospels were produced as a "midrash," that is, a form of Jewish reworking of Hebrew Bible texts. These reworkings were adjusted to the new ideological trends and currents. The story of Jesus, his birth, trial, and crucifixion, is a reworking of the Old Testament with new elements added from the current religious trends in the multicultural milieu of Palestine (e.g., the Resurrection). All we know about Jesus and his mission comes from these Gospels. The first is the Gospel attributed to Mark written way after 70 C.E., probably between 85 and 90, and distributed at the end of the first century. As dramatic as it is, it had no echo in other early documents of the epoch.
10. The collection of "sayings" labeled "Q" and extracted from Matthew and Luke makes no mention of his death and resurrection.⁸⁴ It had no Jesus at its roots and reflected the community preaching the Kingdom of God. "They were assigned to an invented founder who was linked to the heavenly Jesus of Paul and in the Gospel of Mark."⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993); John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffman, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., Milton C. Moreland, managing editor, *The Critical Edition of Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press; Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2000).

⁸⁵ Doherty, *The Jesus Puzzle*.

11. There was initially a variety of sects believing in a spiritual Christ (Messiah) that developed on the basis of religious and ideological trends of the epoch. They had no single originator.
12. Only gradually did Jesus of Nazareth as presented in the Gospels become accepted as a historical figure as is attested by many Christian documents that do not have the notion of a human being as an element of their faith.

Justin Martyr and the Logos

JUSTIN'S SCHOOL IN ROME

Justin Martyr (115–165) is the first Christian Apologist who speculated on religious matters in the philosophical terms of his time and attempted to build a coherent system of thought.¹ He is one of the first Christian writers who, because of his background in Greek schooling,² introduced new concepts and phrases not found in the synoptic Gospels and followed Philo's road to Nicaea. His doctrines were formed under the influence of various religious and philosophical trends of his time. He was influenced by Jewish biblical exegesis, Judeo-Christian writings, Christian Gnostic doctrines, current Greek religious doctrines, and Middle Platonism. However, the primary influence exerted on him was the writings of Philo of Alexandria, whom he mentions by name three times in the *Dialogue with Trypho*,³ and the Greek philosopher Numenius. But Justin does not adhere to Philo's doctrines

¹ Leslie William Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr: An Investigation into Conceptions of Early Christian Literature and Its Hellenistic and Judaic Influences* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968; reprint of the first edition, Jena, 1928); Giuseppe Girgenti, *Giustino Martire: il primo cristiano platonico con il appendice "Atti del martirio di San Giustino,"* presentazione di Claudio Moreschini (Milano: Vita e pensiero, 1995); Theodore Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law* (Cambridge, MA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975); Eric Francis Osborn, *Justin Martyr* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1973); Cullen I. K. Story, *The Nature of Truth in "The Gospel of Truth" and in the Writings of Justin Martyr: A Study of the Pattern of Orthodoxy in the Middle of the Second Christian Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970); Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966); Giorgio Otranto, *Esegesi biblica e storia in Giustino (Dial. 63–84)* (Bari: Istituto di letteratura cristiana, Università, 1979).

² M. J. Edwards, "On the Platonic Schooling of Justin Martyr," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 42 (1991): 17–34.

³ Miroslav Marcovich and Edouardo Des Places, eds., *Justin Dialogus cum Tryphone* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), IX, X, XIII.

slavishly; he expands the doctrines and concepts of Philo, mixing them with the philosophical interpretations of Numenius and adapts such a mixture to the new Christian mythology. Justin, in turn, influenced other Christian writers and was quoted by Tatian, his disciple, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Eusebius of Caesarea.

His writings were probably quite extensive and covered the whole of the emerging Christian theology.⁴ He himself mentions a treatise against all heresies,⁵ a popular theme among early Christian writers. Irenaeus mentions a special treatise against Marcion.⁶ Eusebius mentions several treatises: two *Apologies*, the *Dialogue with Trypho*, *On the Soul*, *On the Unity of God*, *Address to the Greeks*, and some kind of psalter or hymnbook.⁷ A series of writings has been preserved under his name, but among them only the two *Apologies* and the *Dialogue with Trypho* are recognized as authentic. Some include among them also the *Hortatory Address to the Greeks* and *Fragment on the Resurrection* as genuine Justin writings.

We know about the life and education of Justin Martyr from his *First Apology* (written ca. 150–155) and the *Dialogue with Trypho* (written ca. 160).⁸ He was born in Flavia Neapolis (Nablus) in Syria-Palestine, named in honor of the emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus (Vespasian, emperor 69–79). Justin, the son of Priscus and grandson of Bacchius, was brought up in the Gentile Greco-Roman culture. His ancestors were probably Greek colonists who settled in Palestine. His account of studies of the various Greek philosophical schools in search of intellectual explanation of existential questions is a literary fiction, though it may be based on some personal experience. He claims that he had a very high regard for philosophical investigation in line with the Stoic and

⁴ Justin's writings are preserved in one manuscript *Parisinus 450* dated from September 11, 1364.

⁵ *I Apol.* 26.

⁶ Sancti Irenaei Episcopi Lugdunensis, *Libros quinque adversus haereses*, edited by W. Wigan Harvey (Cantabrigiae: Typis Academicis, 1856), IV.XI.2.

⁷ Eusebius of Caesarea, *History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (hereafter *H.E.*), translated with an introduction by G. A. Williamson (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), IV.11.18.

⁸ Writings of Justin in English translation: Rev. Robert Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1867, vol. II, *Justin and Athenagoras*; Saint Justin Martyr, *The First Apology, The Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation to the Greeks, Discourse to the Greeks, The Monarchy or The Rule of God*, translated by Thomas B. Falls (New York: Christian Heritage, 1948); St. Justin Martyr, *The First and Second Apologies*, translated with introduction and notes by Leslie William Barnard (New York: Paulist Press, 1997).

Greek editions of Justin's works: Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994); Miroslav Marcovich and Edouardo Des Places, eds., *Justin Dialogus cum Tryphone* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997); Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Justin Cohortatio Ad Graecos; Oratio Ad Graecos* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990); Jacques P. Migne, ed., *Cursus Patrologiae*, series graeca (Paris, 1844–1855), vol. VI.

Philonic traditions. Philosophy, according to him, is one's greatest possession and is most precious in the sight of God, to whom it alone leads us and to whom it unites us. And those who have applied themselves to philosophy are holy men. But his definition and understanding of philosophy were very limited. He understood it in a very narrow meaning as the knowledge of the existing One, that is, God, and understanding of the Truth, that is, revelation. The goal of philosophy, according to Justin, was to achieve a vision of God and reach a certain mystical unity with God. Justin did not have a scientific or analytical mind. He refused to study music, geometry, and astronomy, which were required by the Pythagorean school as a prerequisite for its philosophy. He claimed that while studying philosophy he became favorably impressed with the Platonic and Pythagorean religious doctrines through which he hoped to reach God, but the perception of incorporeal things quite overwhelmed him, and the Platonic theory of ideas "added wings" to his mind. He exalted Plato and Pythagoras, those wise men who became, for him "a wall and bulwark of our philosophy."⁹ Justin's recourse to philosophy could be quite natural in the Greek culture if it were not only a literary style, as he searched more for mysticism than for analytical knowledge. His narrative is in quite a common style used in order to emphasize the superiority of religious speculation. His attitude, though misleading, could be contrasted with the Christian scripture, where the term "philosophy" is used only once (Col. 2:8) and is characterized there as a deceit and a peril for Christians. The general attitude of Christians toward philosophy as a discipline and practical doctrine for life was a little later succinctly summarized by Tertullian (ca. 170–ca. 220), who held Plato as the source of all heretics.¹⁰

After reading the Gospels and becoming acquainted with the Hebrew prophets, Justin became a Christian probably shortly before the rising of Bar Kokhba (132–135).¹¹ His conversion was also influenced by the strength of conviction that Christians demonstrated in the face of persecution.¹² He came to Rome during the reign of Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161), where he founded what was probably the first Christian catechetical religious school in accordance with the old Greek tradition. He was martyred there as a result of a private accusation by a competitor Cynic philosopher, a certain Crescens, in 165, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180).¹³ Tatian (ca. 110–ca. 185), often called the Assyrian, another Apologist who came to Rome circa

⁹ *Dialogue with Trypho* II, III, V.

¹⁰ Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani, *De Anima* XXIII, in *Opera* (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1954), Pars II.

¹¹ *Dialogue with Trypho* I.

¹² *II Apol.* XII.

¹³ Facts about the life of Justin Martyr are known from his own writings; from Eusebius, *H.E.* 4. 11, 16; from Tatian (*Oratio* XXXII); and from a work from the third century, "The Martyrdom of Justin and Others," in *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, vol. II.

150 from the region near Nisbis, is recognized as Justin's disciple.¹⁴ After Justin's death, Tatian returned to the East, probably to Edessa.

From Justin's writings we may deduce that his school in Rome prepared such materials as catechisms, manuals for instruction against other Christian doctrines usually classified as heresies, and harmonizing texts of the synoptic Gospels. Some of that material was used in the schools in Alexandria after his death. Justin is the most influential Christian theoretician of the second century who formulated assertions of one of the trends of the developing Christianity, until then far dispersed and not systematized, into a more rigorous and formalistic system.

From the studies of Arthur J. Bellinzoni we may now appreciate the extent of the influence exerted by Justin and his school on the development of Christian doctrine and corruption of Gospel manuscripts through their harmonization.¹⁵ A full harmony with the inclusion of the Gospel of John, which was unknown to Justin, was written by his pupil Tatian as the *Diatessaron* circa 170 in Edessa.¹⁶ *Diatessaron* was probably written originally in Syriac and was used widely in the East. The preserved fragments found in Dura Europos are in Greek translation and date from the time when the fortress of Dura Europos fell to the Persians in 256–257. It represented a separate ascetic branch of Christianity influenced by Jewish thought that preserved continuity with the original spirit of the Gospels, more removed from the intellectual speculations so typical of the Hellenistic environment. Tatian was associated in Edessa with the sect of Encratites, who taught that “marriage was from the devil,” and as such he was declared a heretic by some church fathers in the West.¹⁷ His *Diatessaron* was condemned only in the fifth century and copies of the book were removed from the churches in the East by the bishop of Edessa, Rabbula (r. 411–435), and by the bishop of Cyrus, in upper Syria, Theodoret (r. 423–457), in an attempt to Hellenize the Eastern churches. Tatian as well as Justin was declared heretical. We have evidence that Irenaeus (ca. 130–ca. 200) may also be among the first who accepted the authority of the Fourth Gospel circa 180 in his treatise *Against Heresies*.¹⁸

¹⁴ Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* (Greek and Latin), edited by Ioann. Carol Theod. Otto (Wiesbaden: Dr. Martin Sändig, 1969; reprint of the 1851 edition); Eusebius, *H.E.* 4.16.7–9; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.28.1; Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, edited by Miroslav Marcovich (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), VIII.9.

¹⁵ Arthur J. Bellinzoni, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Writings of Justin Martyr* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967).

¹⁶ Carmel McCarthy, ed., *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); C. H. Kraeling, *A Greek Fragment of Tatian's "Diatessaron" from Dura* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007; reprint of 1935).

¹⁷ Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion*, translated by Frank Williams (New York: E. J. Brill, 1987, 1994), *Against Tatianists* 46; *Against Encratites* 47.

¹⁸ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III.11.8.

Sources of Justin's writings were studied quite extensively.¹⁹ Justin quotes the New Testament from written sources available to him from the canonical Gospels or from the postsynoptic sources. Justin refers to these sources as "Memoirs of the Apostles" (τὰ Ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων).²⁰ There are only three sayings of Jesus that do not have parallels in any of the synoptic Gospels. A saying quoted in *Dialogue with Trypho* XXXV:3b, "There shall be schisms and heresies," is based on a collection of sayings used by early Christians as a manual against heresies. The second saying quoted by Justin in *Dialogue with Trypho* XLVII:5, "Wherefore also our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'In whatsoever things I shall take you, in these I shall judge you,'" as attributed to Jesus is alluded to in some Latin sources of the early church, Cyprian's *De Mortalitate* and Athanasius's *Vita S. Antoni*.²¹ The third saying in *I Apol.* 61:4, "Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," has no synoptic Gospel parallel either, but has a parallel in the Gospel of John 3:3 and 3:5. Bellinzoni argues that in the third saying Justin preserved a baptismal liturgical tradition older than that found in John and which is probably the same source for both texts. At the same time, it is the only case of a pre-Gospel tradition cited by Justin. With this one exception, Justin did not use the presynoptic sources or the noncanonical gospels for his quotations and analysis. Often his source was a harmony of the synoptic Gospels prepared either by him or by his school, as was established definitively by Bellinzoni and others.²² Examples of such collected sayings could be a catechism prepared in Justin's school or elsewhere and used by the early Christians, or a manual of sayings against heresies.

With regard to the Old Testament sources of Justin, Oskar Skarsaune established that:

1. Justin's non-LXX²³ quotations are not free quotations from memory, nor are they made *ad hoc* by Justin himself, modifying the standard LXX text. Nor are they taken from deviant biblical manuscripts. They are taken from written, Christian sources, and in these sources we find the main sources of exegetical arguments in Justin. 2. The

¹⁹ For a review of the older literature and the definitive study of the sources related to the canonical gospels and patristic literature, see Bellinzoni, *The Sayings of Jesus*. For a review of Justin's Old Testament sources, see Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Texts Tradition; Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987).

²⁰ *I Apol.* LXVI, LXVII.

²¹ Cyprian, *De Mortalitate* 17, in Migne, PL 4.616; Athanasius, *Vita S. Antoni*, in Migne, PL 73.136.

²² William Sanday, *The Gospels in the Second Century* (London, 1876); M. Engelhardt, *Das Christentum Justins des Märtyres* (Erlangen, 1878); E. Lippelt, *Quae fuerunt Iustini Martyris Ἀπομνημονεύματα ...* (Halle, 1901); H. Koester, "The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century," in *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century*, edited by W. L. Petersen (Notre Dame-London, 1989); Bellinzoni, *The Sayings of Jesus*, p. 140.

²³ LXX refers to the Septuagint text.

long LXX quotations in Justin's text are not secondary amplifications by later scribes, but are Justin's own excerpts from the biblical manuscripts to which he had access... Some of the Justin material was a school-tradition; the boundaries between written and oral sources may in some cases be floating. Written tracts may have served as a basis for oral exposition.²⁴

By quoting the Old Testament from the LXX and interpreting it, Justin is invoking the missionary tradition of earlier Christianity, which used it as the proof text for Gentile audiences. These texts were supposed to guarantee the reliability of the old Hebrew prophecies as predicting Christ in a version propagated by Justin. Justin retells the older tradition, which looked to the Old Testament for proof of the existence of a Second God and develops it into the complete theory of theophanies as appearances of Christ. We see in this process also the mechanism for the writing of the Gospels where the Jesus story was fashioned on some elements taken from the Old Testament and adapted by a peculiar interpretation to the new religious movement.

THE LOGOS

Logos spermatikos, the Logos, and the Divinity of the Son

Justin's concept of the Logos has roots in Greek philosophical tradition starting with Heraclitus through the Stoics, to Philo of Alexandria and the Middle Platonists. In Heraclitus, the Logos was an aspect and function of the cosmic fire.²⁵ With the Stoics, the Logos became a cosmic rational principle, the vehicle for which was *pneuma* and which was responsible for maintaining and governing the universe as well as human rationality. Still later it became an element of human moral responsibility and moral awareness. It could be equated with the World Soul as spoken of by Alcinous²⁶ and Atticus,²⁷ with the Second God (or Mind) of Numenius, and the First Power of the God of Philo. Justin fused these various traditions of the Logos with the function ascribed to the Son of God and the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) and thus equated the Greek Logos with his concept of the cosmic Son of God, the Second Pneuma. By this procedure he was able to show the continuity of religious assertions and speculate that Christianity and Christians existed even before the appearance of Jesus Christ on earth. This was possible because in the Heraclitean-Stoic tradition human reason was a part of the original divine Logos (originally a cosmic fire) that we acquire through breathing. Human participation in or partaking of (μετοχὴ) the Logos, that is, sharing a part or the modification of

²⁴ Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy*, p. 8.

²⁵ Frag. 64; *The Cosmic Fragments*, edited with an introduction and commentary by G. S. Kirk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), pp. 349, 396.

²⁶ *Didaskalikos* 14.

²⁷ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio evangelica* 15.12.

the divine Logos, is responsible for our being intelligent and acquiring wisdom. But in spite of having a part of the Logos, many live as though they had a private understanding, that is, they do not heed the instruction of this Logos.²⁸ Following such a doctrine, Justin states that the Logos is the personal reason of God in which all men partake:

For not only among the Greeks were these things revealed through Socrates by reason [*logos*], but also among the non-Hellenic peoples by the Logos Himself, who assumed a human form and became man, and was called Jesus Christ.²⁹

Here the logos of Socrates is the Heraclitean logos as part of the cosmic Logos/divine Power implanted in every man. Moreover, this divine Logos assumed the human form in Jesus Christ.

Justin recognizes that men everywhere by philosophizing and producing laws to do some things and refrain from doing others are instructed by the Logos. He even praises the Stoics for their doctrine of morals; but, referring to their metaphysical doctrine, he claims they “are wrong ... in their teaching on principles and incorporeal beings.” Each person was able to speak well according to the part present in him of the divine Logos, who is the Sower, and whenever he sowed what was akin to him.³⁰

In addition, Justin states:

Everything that the philosophers or legislators discoursed and expressed well, they accomplished through their discovery and contemplation of some part of the Logos. But, since they did not have a full knowledge of the Logos, which is Christ, they often contradicted themselves.

Justin thus claims that every man has an intellectual power implanted, a logos, which is specified as either a seed of the Logos (σπέρμα τοῦ Λόγου) or a part of the divine Sower Logos (μέρος τοῦ σπερματικῆς Θεοῦ Λόγου), which is the natural source of wisdom for all men. Justin, for example, holds Socrates in particularly high regard, claiming that Socrates knew Christ partially as “He (Christ) was and is the logos who is in every person and who foretold the things that were to come to pass both through the prophets and in his own person, when he assumed our nature, and taught these things.” Thus, he implied that Socrates could only partially know and recognize what became the teaching of Christ. When Christ came, he proved that not all opinions or old doctrines are good, but that some are evil, and some are good. In contrast, Christians live by the knowledge and contemplation of the whole Logos of God which is Christ.

²⁸ Heraclitus, frag. 129, in ed. Kirk, pp. 341, 365, in T. M. Robinson, ed., *Heraclitus Fragments* (Toronto: University Press of Toronto, 1987), p. 177; Heraclitus, frags. 129, 131, 133, in Robinson, *Heraclitus*; Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* VIII, 132, in ed. Kirk, p. 33; Heraclitus, frag. 982 B, in ed. Kirk.

²⁹ *I Apol.* V.

³⁰ *II Apol.* VII, VIII, X, XIII.

And Justin proudly asserts, “What we have, then, appears to be greater than all human teachings, because the whole rational principle [Logos] became Christ, who appeared for our sake, body, reason [logos], and soul.”³¹

There is an equivalency between the terms “seed of the Logos” and “part of the spermatic divine Logos,” and both are related to the Sower, the spermatic Logos as a part to the whole.³² What Justin wants to say is that in his anthropology the rational part of the human constitution or the rational part of the soul is carried out by the noetic substance, which is the fragment or part of the divine Logos (i.e., Pneuma of Christ), which is at the same time the Sower (*logos spermatikos* in Justinian nomenclature) of itself. Of course, the source of this Sower Logos is God the Father. In incarnate Christ, his logos was the whole divine Logos.

The other way in which Justin stresses the difference in understanding between the non-Christians and Christians is by contrasting between the seed of the Logos, which is equated with imitation of the Logos, and the whole Logos from which it is derived by partaking and copying it through the grace of the Logos. He asserts that ancient writers, by means of the engrafted seed of the Word [Logos] that was implanted in them, had a slim glimpse of the truth.³³

The incarnate Christ is identified with the entire Logos, which became a human being in all three respects of humanity: body, logos (rational element or *pneuma*), and soul.³⁴ But the incarnate Christ is not of human origin, has no real blood relation with the human race, and has not assumed humanity; however, he became a human being still retaining all his powers of the Logos of God.³⁵ There is, however, the thorny question of Jesus’ baptism interpreted by Justin to be a symbol for men as designating the divinity of Jesus, the Son of God.³⁶ And Justin emphasizes that the logos, which is in every man, is the Power of the ineffable Father and not a mere instrument of human reason.³⁷

The original concept of the *logos spermatikos* or seed force was developed by the Stoics who designated the primal principle of the cosmic Pneuma (Logos) operating as the seminal logos (or seed) of the natural world. Thus, the souls of men partook of the cosmic Logos. This principle operating in individual beings in the world was designated as seminal because it was the generative source of everything in the world, physical and noetic. For Justin, it was a *pneuma* functioning as an intellectual principle.³⁸

³¹ Ibid., X, XIII.

³² Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought*, n.71, pp. 196–201.

³³ *II Apol.* XIII.

³⁴ *I Apol.* XXIII, LXIII; *Dialogue with Trypho* LIV, LXXXVI, LXXXIV, C.

³⁵ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXXXVI, LXXXIV, LXXXVIII, XCVIII, CIII, CX; *II Apol.* X.

³⁶ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXXXVII–LXXXVIII.

³⁷ *II Apol.* X.

³⁸ *I Apol.* XLIV; *Dialogue with Trypho* IV.

Philo understood the seminal (or generative) logos as the archetypical ideas that exist in the world and constitute reality. They make things and events happen in the natural physical world just as they operate in the process of intellection and moral judgment.³⁹ Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.) and other followers of the Stoics gave the Stoic seed force an ethical interpretation speaking of the *semina iustitiae* as elements present in the mind and soul of each individual as a reflection, a part of the divine mind, present since the earliest generations of men and enabling them to love, and have knowledge, a proper community life, and a standard of law and justice.⁴⁰ Cicero described this reason in such terms:

[It is what] unites men, and what natural fellowship there is among them.... Law is the highest reason, implanted in Nature, which commands what ought to be done and forbids the opposite. This reason, when firmly fixed and fully developed in the human mind, is Law.... And reason, when it is full grown and perfected, is rightly called wisdom. Therefore, since there is nothing better than reason, and since it exists both in man and God, the first common possession of man and God is reason. But those who have reason in common must also have right reason in common. And the right reason is Law.... Further those who share Law must also share Justice; and those who share these are to be regarded as members of the same commonwealth.... For Justice is one; it binds all human society, and is based on one law, which is right reason applied to command and prohibition.⁴¹

It seems that Justin used the reference to the seed of truth as being present in the moral and intellectual striving of men, which is the moral disposition implanted in the soul of men as a part of the whole, the divine Logos, Christ.⁴² In doing this, Justin also alludes to the Stoic idea of general concepts as the concepts given to man a priori, which are predominantly of a religious and moral character and embedded in man and providing him with the faculty of knowing good and evil.⁴³ The metaphor of “seed” was widely used and had some connection with the parable of the sower in Matthew (13:3) and other Christian writings, and it was often used in the picture of sowing and planting in Philo’s works.

Justin explains that it happened because of the demons who “brought about that everyone, who strives in any way to live according to right reason [a Stoic term] and to avoid evil, to be an object of hatred.” Also, the term God is an

³⁹ *Leg. Alleg.* III.150; *Quis rer. div. heres* 119; *Quest. in Exod.* II.68.

⁴⁰ Cicero, *Du bien suprême et des maux les plus graves (De Finibus)*, traduction nouvelle avec notice et notes par Charles Appuhn (Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères, 1938), 4.18.

⁴¹ Cicero, *De Legibus*, in *De Re Publica, De Legibus*, translated by C. W. Keyes (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1988), I.V.16; I.V.18; I.VII.23; I.XV.42.

⁴² Story, *The Nature of Truth*, p. 221.

⁴³ *II Apol.* XIV; Carl Andresen, *Logos und Nomos; die Polemik des Kelsos wider das Christentum* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1955).

intuition implanted in the nature of man.⁴⁴ God, according to Justin, cannot have a name, “For whatever has a name received it from a person older than himself” and, then God would have a superior. So we have an intuition of God, but the term is not a real name, but the expression of man’s innate opinion of a thing that can scarcely be defined.⁴⁵

Justin mixes and creatively elaborates on various sources and traditions that all men possess “seeds of the Logos,” and thus through it they can arrive at facets of the truth.⁴⁶ The author, however, who seems to be the direct source of Justin’s elaboration on the theme of the *spermatic logos* is also Numenius.⁴⁷ As we shall discuss in the next chapter, Justin developed a metaphysical triadic (or dyadic) scheme corresponding directly with that of Numenius. We can mention briefly here that Numenius was a Byzantine philosopher contemporary with Justin who stayed in Rome. In Numenius’s system, it is the First God (or Mind) who is the source of the Second God, who is equivalent to the whole Logos, the Son of God, of Justin. In both Numenius and Justin, the First God is the source of the universal and animating soul, which is then distributed to individuals. It is not clear in Numenius whether the Second God (Mind), the “lawgiver,” implants, distributes, and transplants in everyone of us only the seed planted by the First God⁴⁸ or its own *nous* as well. In Justin, however, the Logos plants itself in the form of its own substance. In one fragment, Numenius clarifies that it is the Second God (Mind) who sends the intellect (νοῦς) down to earth to all those who are destined to participate in it.⁴⁹ If so, then we may identify the Second Mind also with the *logos spermaticos* because it propagates the Idea, the noetic world that partakes of it, and the individual soul. The noetic world within the individual soul is a presentation of the Second Mind, which partakes

⁴⁴ Ibid., VIII, VI.

⁴⁵ Ibid., VI. In the Hellenistic world it was a common opinion that there is one God, who is superior and rules over the world: “You will see one according law and assertion in all the earth, that there is one God, the king and father of all things, and many gods, sons of God, ruling together with him. This the Greek says, and the Barbarian says, the inhabitant of the continent, and he who dwells near the sea, the wise and the unwise.” Maximus of Tyre, the second-century Greek rhetorician, in Thomas Taylor, trans., *Dissertations of Maximus Tyrius* (London: C. Whittingham, 1804). Also Michael Trapp, trans., *Maximus of Tyre: The Philosophical Orations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁴⁶ Barnard, *The First and Second Apologies*, n. 71 to *II Apol.*, pp. 196–201.

⁴⁷ Edwards, “On the Platonic Schooling of Justin Martyr,” part 1, pp. 17–34; M. J. Edwards, “Justin’s Logos and the Word of God,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, no. 3 (1995): 261–280; Marian Hillar, “Numenius and Greek Philosophical Sources of Christian Doctrine,” in *Proceedings of the Twenty-First World Congress of Philosophy*, Istanbul, August 10–17, 2003 (Ankara: Turkish Philosophical Society, 2006), vol. 8, pp. 55–60.

⁴⁸ Numenius, *Fragments*, texte établi et traduit par Édouard des Places (Paris: Société d’Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1973); *The Neoplatonic Writings of Numenius*, collected and translated from the Greek by Kenneth Guthrie, with foreword by Michael Wagner (Lawrence, KS: Selene Books, 1987; first published in 1917); frag. 13 (Des Places); frag. 28 (Guthrie).

⁴⁹ Frag. 12 (Des Places); frag. 27a (Guthrie).

of reality and has been implanted by itself, the Second Mind. It corresponds in Justin's system to the seed or part of the *spermatikos logos* (i.e., the whole Logos or the Logos itself).

The relationship between the Minds in the Numenius system is represented by two metaphors – that of a filial descendance or that of copying (imitating). Both representations are united by the emanational mechanism used by both Numenius and Justin to explain the connections between these metaphysical entities.

In the Numenius philosophy, men are individuals, the soul as totality of souls is divisible into individual souls, and the three Minds are distinct to a degree that the Third is nothing to the First. Yet, in the final analysis, Numenius affirms that all is a close mixture and that everything is in everything, and all is united. Even the individual soul contains the whole intelligible world.⁵⁰ The Second Mind creates its own Idea, yet it partakes of the First Mind.

In discussing the source of life, Numenius indicates that the ultimate source of life is the First Mind in which the Second Mind participates. It, in turn, communicates life to the Third world. Similarly, Justin speaks of the “animating *pneuma*” as deriving directly from God.

The mechanism by which all things are united in Numenius's metaphysics is by participation and partaking. Consequently, it seems that in the final analysis Numenius does not distinguish between the participating and the participated. Justin, however, claims that “that which partakes of anything is different from that of which it does partake”⁵¹ and, by insisting on the numerical and functional distinction between his metaphysical entities, seems to stress differentiation and separate identities. But the difference between Numenius and Justin is only in the superficial aspects because all these noetic entities are united by their common noetic substance, *pneuma*. This point is not, however, exploited by Justin.

Similarly Numenius is the source for Justin's understanding of the human soul. Numenius differentiated not three parts in the human soul but two souls, one rational and the other irrational according to their substances.⁵² In Justin's doctrine, there are two components of the soul. The important conclusion from this philosophical stand is the mortality of the soul. In a discussion with the old man, Justin rejects the notion that the soul is immortal by nature and accepts the conclusion of the latter that the soul is mortal because it only partakes of life, which is God (i.e., it is not identical with life). But it contains a vivifying part that, according to Justin, is the animating *pneuma* (God's Pneuma, Pneuma of the Father), which after death returns back to its source.⁵³

⁵⁰ Frag. 41 (Des Places); frag. 12 (Des Places); frag. 51 (Des Places).

⁵¹ *Dialogue with Trypho* VI.

⁵² Frag. 44 (Des Places).

⁵³ *Dialogue with Trypho* VI.

The concept of the individual logos as the incarnation of the Father's intelligence and rational thought in man, Jesus Christ/Messiah/Savior, was not enough for the Christians and Justin. They believed also in the Christ/Messiah as a separate numerically pneumatic being, who became incarnated in the man Jesus.

To prove this, Justin argues that the Logos (Word) had the name of Christ/Messiah before the Incarnation, which demonstrates that he is an entity dependent on and begotten by someone else, by God the Father, who anointed him and arranged all the things of creation through him.⁵⁴

Further, Justin argues, using the Philonic metaphor, not only that Logos was a name distinct from the Father as the light is from the sun but that it was numerically distinct, which meant for Justin a different being, or entity.⁵⁵ Using the scripture as evidence, Justin claims that he can show that "God has begotten of himself a certain rational Power as a Beginning before all other creatures."⁵⁶

This clearly numerically distinct individual ascribed to the Logos by Justin differentiates his concept from that of John in the prologue to his Gospel and also from Philo's and Theophilus's usage. Whereas Philo and Theophilus emphasized the unity of substance of the Logos with the Father, Justin emphasized its dual divine individuality and claimed, following Philo's allegorical method of explaining scripture, that since this "Offspring" appeared to the Jewish patriarchs in the epiphanies recorded in the Old Testament, therefore "they call him the Logos [Word], because he reveals to men the discourses of the Father."

The Son of God is clearly an explicit individualization or hypostatization of an attribute of God. Justin explicitly claims he is "another God" "begotten by an act of the Father's will"⁵⁷ and was also generated a second time in human form during the incarnation.⁵⁸ The purpose of Christ's incarnation was the "defeat of the demons,"⁵⁹ in accordance with the Hellenic tradition, and, quite in accordance with the Hebrew tradition, "to call to repentance."⁶⁰ There is not a trace here of Pauline redemption theory but only Greek religion mixed with Hebrew attitude.

The view that Justin developed regarding duality in the divine Being was in conflict with Jewish monotheism, and thus Justin had to prove to Trypho the existence of a God other than the Creator but subordinate to him, "who is called an Angel because he announces to men whatsoever the Creator of the

⁵⁴ *II Apol.* VI.

⁵⁵ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXI, LXII, CXXVIII, CXXIX.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, LXI, LXII.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, CXXVIII; LVI; LXI.

⁵⁸ *I Apol.* XLVI; *Dialogue with Trypho* LXXXV; cf. *I Apol.* XXII, XXIII, XXXIII.

⁵⁹ *II Apol.* VI.

⁶⁰ *I Apol.* XV.

universe wishes.”⁶¹ Justin argues, quite in the Greek tradition, that God has a Son who, being the First-begotten Logos of the God, is also a God.⁶² That is why Justin went through the trouble of demonstrating that the individuality of this Second God or Christ called Logos is evident from the theophanies recorded in the Old Testament, which point to another God who appeared either to the patriarchs or from the passages where God the Father is presented as speaking to another God or Gods (Gen. 1:25–26; 3:22).⁶³

Justin deduced the same conclusion from the texts found in the wisdom literature, which imply a poetic or real individualization of divine wisdom (Prov. 8:22) and which Justin quotes with his own interpretation.⁶⁴

The thought of Justin follows the thought of Philo, who interpreted the theophanies of the Old Testament as appearances of the Logos but not as a separate pneumatic being.⁶⁵ Philo wanted only to remove anthropomorphic elements from the scripture and to emphasize the unchangeability of God. Justin, however, made a step forward with respect to Philo, who, though he differentiated the Logos from the Father as a Power that could at times be separated, insisted on the numerical oneness, claiming that the Triad (or, in reality, Dyad) is only a perception by imperfect men, not a divine reality. Justin, on the contrary, is the first among the Christians who insisted on the numerical distinction of the Logos from the transcendent Father as a Second God, and doing so, he realized that such a distinction of the Logos is a ditheism. So he preserves the monotheism by emphasizing the singularity and superiority of the divine pneumatic being, the Father, anterior to the creation, and the subordination of the Second God to the First, the Father. Thus, according to Justin, the Logos was begotten by the will and power of God as a preparatory step before the creation of the universe, and not as a process of eternal creation as in Philonic theory. The Logos thus is the Firstborn and is the Beginning of all created things, “First-begotten of all creatures.”⁶⁶ The Logos could be considered as an emanation or radiation from God, just like rays from the sun, but it did not proceed by abscission such that the being of the Father would be diminished. Justin illustrates the generation of the Logos by the analogy of the spoken word and by the kindling of fire by fire, processes that do not diminish either the capacity to pronounce more words or the original fire. The Logos was not eternal in the sense that it was begotten from eternity; it had a beginning, but in essence it was a unity with the Father being the same species. Hence, the Logos is called God and divine by Justin, although it is dependent on the

⁶¹ *Dialogue with Trypho* LVI.

⁶² *I Apol.* LXIII.

⁶³ *Dialogue with Trypho* LVI–CXLII, LXII.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, CXXIX.

⁶⁵ *Som.* I.227, 231.

⁶⁶ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXII, CXXV.

exercise of the Father's will. Justin states again and again that Christ (Logos) is "God the Son," "He is God, Son of the One, Unbegotten, Ineffable God," "the Holy Spirit calls Christ God."⁶⁷ Moreover, Justin always links Christ (Logos) with Jewish history and Jewish scripture:

The name Israel, then, means a man who overcomes power, for Isra is "a man who overcomes" and El is "power." That Christ would do this when he became man was thus foretold by the mystery of Jacob's wrestling with him who appeared to him, in that Christ ministered to the will of God, yet he is God, because he is the First-begotten of all creatures.⁶⁸

Justin constantly insists: "It has also been shown at length that this Power which the Prophetic Word also calls God and Angel not only is numbered as different by its name (as the light of the sun), but is something distinct in real number." And Justin quotes the Old Testament to indicate the fanciful scriptural testimony that the Father and the Logos were two in number and communicated with each other.⁶⁹

The concept of the Logos introduced into early Christian thought became a useful and convenient tool to bridge Christianity with Hellenism on the one hand and served as a vehicle bridging Judaism with Greek religion on the other. In Greek philosophical thought there was a need for a link between God, who became absolutized in the Platonic and Aristotelian systems, and the visible world. And such a link was provided by the Stoic Logos that shaped and directed the world, later transformed into the Second God of Numenius. Jews expected a Messiah, but this Messiah with all exaltation ascribed to him was to be a human, "a man of men," and moreover, as Trypho states in the dialogue with Justin, he was to be preceded by the coming of the prophet Elijah, who would anoint him. Justin believed that the Spirit (Pneuma) of God who was manifested in Elijah preceded Christ already as a herald in the person of John the Baptist, and that was supposedly confirmed by Jesus himself.⁷⁰

The followers of the Jesus movement treated Jesus first as a political and moral leader. After his failure they invented the concept of his *parousia*, and by adopting the Hellenistic religious thinking, Paul made it possible to fuse the Greek concept of the metaphysical Logos, the Hebrew concept of the Messiah, and the Greek concept of the Savior into the mythical figure of Jesus, who could be based on some revolutionary figure of first-century Palestine. Slowly the image of Christ/Messiah/Logos/Savior became idealized and led to its deification. As such, it could find wide acceptance among unphilosophical and unsophisticated followers of the new religion.

⁶⁷ Ibid., LXI, CXXVII, CXXVI, CXXIV; cf. *ibid.*, CXIII.

⁶⁸ Ibid., CXXV, CXXVIII.

⁶⁹ Ibid., CXXVIII, CXXIX.

⁷⁰ Ibid., XLIX; Matt. 17:12-13.

Christians, in developing their new mythology, transposed the Heraclitean/Stoic worldview in a Philonic/Numenic extension on the mythical figure of the Jewish Messiah, who became interpreted now in supernatural and metaphysical terms as the Greek Savior. Moreover, the doctrine of the Logos allowed the Christians and Justin to solve, on the cosmological level, the problem of the origin of Christianity, showing that it was present already with the beginning of the world. But Christians did not hold to reason in their speculations. On the contrary, they held to the old Hebrew stories and wrote an artificial story of their leader, Jesus, looking for “facts” in the old myths.

The first coming of the Christ (the begotten Logos) by incarnation was supposedly already fulfilled, though Justin does not know what the purpose of his coming was. Nevertheless, Justin tries to explain it, quite in the Greek manner, as the reversal of the destruction and death brought upon man by the intercourse of Eve with the word of the serpent.⁷¹

And his second coming, according to Justin, was also predicted by the prophets:

He shall gloriously come from Heaven with his angelic army, when he shall also raise to life the bodies of all the men that ever were, shall cloak the worthy with immortality, and shall relegate the wicked, subject to sensible pain for all eternity, into the eternal fire together with the evil demons.⁷²

Justin, inspired by the vision of the book of Daniel (7:13), describes the coming of the Jewish Messiah who is to perform his function of a judge, applying Daniel’s vision to Jesus Christ, and who himself will pass judgment on the whole human race.⁷³

The salvation concept associated with the figure of the Messiah in the Hebrew culture, which concerned only the nation of Israel, now could be universalized and expressed by the figure of the Logos/Savior. Moreover, the Jewish myth of a chosen people was extended to the Christians, as participating in the whole Logos and, as such, the newly elected by God. At the same time, however, all other people were invited to become Christians and share in the benefits.

The Logos doctrine provided a basis for the intellectual view of salvation still rooted in the Hebrew tradition, that is, that the Logos as the Christ/Messiah was the teacher of the word that brought salvation to man: “Jesus Christ alone is properly the Son of God, since he is his Word [Logos], First-begotten, and Power, and that having become man by his will, he taught us these doctrines for the conversion and restoration of humankind.”⁷⁴ In commenting on the verse of Isaiah (1:10–20), Justin claims:

⁷¹ *Dialogue with Trypho C.*

⁷² *I Apol.* LII; also *Dialogue with Trypho XXXI.*

⁷³ *I Apol.* LIII.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, XXIII.

Indeed, Isaiah did not send you to the bath to wash away murder and other sins which all the water of the ocean could not cleanse, but, ... by faith through the blood and the death of Christ who suffered death for this precise purpose.⁷⁵

Justin Martyr as a pioneer “philosophizing” Christian takes over the earlier Christian use of the term *logos* familiar to Christians and non-Christians as well. But, unlike John, Justin admits a larger element of philosophical speculation into his conception of the term. Though Justin used all available speculations about the concept of *logos* of his time, it was Middle Platonism in the forms of Numenius’s writings that was the immediate source of Justin’s doctrine. As it was pointed out by Barnard and Goodenough, he was best acquainted with Plato’s thought in its Middle Platonic and Philonic doctrine.⁷⁶ He may have taken the concept of the *Logos* from the tradition of the early Christians who inherited it via Philo, but he does link it with Christian doctrine – he hypostatizes and identifies the resurrected Christ/Messiah as the *Logos*, links him with the creation of the world (clearly a Philonic feature), and invokes redemption by his incarnation, death, and resurrection (an extension of the intermediary and suppliant role ascribed by Philo to the *Logos*). Justin tried to explain the doctrine of the *Logos* by philosophical speculation using all available apparatus.

The Johannine *Logos* is nonphilosophical; it is based on the Old Testament doctrine of the Word (*Davar* = *Logos*) as the expression of God in the creation and revelation. Analysis of the texts shows that Justin’s interpretation of the *Logos* in the religious context is a Philonic one as an intermediate between transcendent God and man and as an agent of God or Second God, and not the Stoic one as the universal reason. Justin’s *Logos* is Jesus Christ/Messiah understood in the light of a fancy reading of the Old Testament “Word of God” and Greek philosophy as an individual, pneumatic, and personified intermediary of God.

The *Logos* is generated for the purpose of creation and revelation as the agent and servant of God.⁷⁷

He is the Father’s messenger (Angel) and Apostle.⁷⁸

The Word [*Logos*] of God is his Son ... and he is called Angel and Apostle; for as Angel he announces all that we must know, and as Apostle he is sent forth to inform us of what has been revealed.⁷⁹

And he, “according to God’s will, is God the Son, and his [God’s] Angel because he served the Father’s will.”⁸⁰ He is a minister capable of immediate

⁷⁵ *Dialogue with Trypho* XIII.

⁷⁶ Barnard, *St. Justin Martyr, The First and Second Apologies*; Goodenough, *Theology*.

⁷⁷ *I Apol.* LXIV; *II Apol.* VI; *Dialogue with Trypho* XIII.

⁷⁸ *I Apol.* LXIII; *Dialogue with Trypho* CXXVII.

⁷⁹ *I Apol.* LXIII.

⁸⁰ *Dialogue with Trypho* CXXVIII.

self-revelation to the creatures and commissioned to carry messages and to do things, for example, inflict punishment on Sodom and Gomorrah.⁸¹ As the Wisdom in the Jewish wisdom literature (but used metaphorically as reflected in human wisdom), the Logos is the medium between the transcendent God and the finite world. He is subordinate to the Father, both as to his individuality, which is begotten at some point anterior to the creation, and as to his office. And he is worshiped by Christians in the second place after God the Father of all.⁸²

The Origin of the Logos and Its Preexistence

In the *Second Apology* Justin explains the origin and generation of the Logos Christ/Messiah in these words:

But his Son, who alone is properly called Son, the Word [Logos], who was with him [God, the Father] and was begotten before the things ... is called Christ, because he was anointed and because God the Father arranged all the things of creation through him.⁸³

By naming the Son Logos who was with God, Justin seems to make a statement similar to that in John's Gospel,⁸⁴ but he does not explain the manner in which this "Logos was with God." This statement and other similar ones suggest the previous existence of the Logos before the creation of the world and the source of the Logos. Begetting of the Logos is treated by Justin as a preparatory step for the creation process, and the begotten Logos is named Christ because of its commission.⁸⁵ In Justin's time the cosmological aspect of divine existence was of primary importance and the theme of "begetting" was popular in the Greek environment. Justin seems to emphasize that Logos was not unbegotten as God the Father, and that the Logos, after being generated just before the formation of the world, assisted God in the creation. Christ was generated by a kind of emanation without abscission, first in the beginning, that is, before the creation of the world, which was subsequently created "in the beginning," and through the Logos.

The quoted passage was subject to various interpretations. One of them assumes that we are led by Justin to believe that the Logos is immanent in God as his attribute of reason, in the preexistent, innate, unbegotten form (whatever it may mean) of the Son of God, similar to the Philonic concept of immanent God's Power (later described as the *logos endiathetos*), which "came forth" as a separate pneumatic being (*logos prophorikos*) as the Christ, or as

⁸¹ Ibid., LVI, LVII, LX, CXXV, CXXVI, LX.

⁸² *I Apol.* VI, XIII, LXI.

⁸³ *II Apol.* VI.

⁸⁴ Jn. I:1.

⁸⁵ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXII, LXIII, CXXVIII.

supposedly the same Pneuma (Spirit) that is mentioned in Genesis and is “said to be borne upon the water.”⁸⁶ This “begotten” pneumatic Logos/Christ in the Justin version does not correspond to the concept of the expressed Logos of Philo or Theophilus, which can be described as the *logos prophorikos*, because Philo denied its numerical separation from the Father. Philo did not break with the Jewish tradition of the “spoken word” as God’s action or expression of his power. An interpretation of the Logos similar to Philo’s we may find in John’s (Jn. 1:1) image where there is no generation of the Logos as being or Spirit (Pneuma), but as a power with God, only it became incarnated in Jesus (i.e., it became the man Jesus). So in John’s scheme there was only one generation of the Son of God – his incarnation or embodiment in the man Jesus who became Christ/Messiah. In the Justin scheme, on the contrary, there are two generations: the first before the creation as a being, the Pneumatic Logos, the Son of God who has the name Christ because of his function and commission, and the second as his incarnation into Jesus, the man.

This metaphor of the “inner reason” and of the “uttered voice” or “uttered reason,” used by John in accordance with the Hebrew tradition for the unbegotten and begotten Logos respectively, was aptly emphasized by the already mentioned Theophilus⁸⁷ in his preserved discourse, *To Autolytus*. The Theophilus doctrine represents a direct application of Philo’s Logos doctrine to the Christian myth. Theophilus described the Logos (Thought) that existed before the creation of the world, similar to Philo’s concept, as an innate (*endiathetos*) Mind and Intelligence of God, so that it was coeternal with God. But then it became expressed (*prophorikos*) to become a Word (Logos) and be used as the instrument of creation. In contrast, Philo maintained that this “generation” of the Logos was eternal in accordance with his concept of eternal creation of the world as well. Theophilus writes about the Logos thus:

Therefore God, having his own Logos innate in his own bowels, generated him together with his own Sophia, vomiting him forth before everything else. He used this Logos as his servant in the things created by him, and through him he made all things.... It was he, Spirit [*Pneuma*] of God and Beginning and Sophia and Power of the Most High who came down into the prophets and spoke through them about the creation of the world and all the rest.⁸⁸

Theophilus cannot decide how many of God’s Powers there are and therefore gives to the expressed Logos various names derived from the Old and New Testament texts – Beginning, Wisdom (Sophia), Power of the Most High, Light, Voice, Son, Power of God. Theophilus has a special problem in assigning

⁸⁶ *I Apol.* LX.

⁸⁷ Eusebius in *H.E.* 4.19, 24 mentions Theophilus as the author of *To Autolytus*, *The Heresy of Hermogenes Answered*, *Revelation of John*, and *Manuals of Elementary Instruction*.

⁸⁸ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolytum*, text and translation by Robert M. Grant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), II.10.

to Sophia a function or role distinct from that of the Logos, but he considers it one of the two “hands of God.”⁸⁹ Sometimes he identifies it with the Holy Spirit (Pneuma), sometimes with the Logos.

Though Logos is described as an instrument of creation, it was the Logos that created light in the Genesis scheme of creation. Moreover, “God by his Logos made the water come together into one assembly and made visible the dry land which was previously invisible.”⁹⁰

Theophilus explicitly talks about the expressed or begotten Logos as the companion of God, his Son, with whom God conversed. Trying to identify the voice Adam heard in Paradise, Theophilus wrote:

Indeed the God and father of the universe is unconfined and is not present in a place, for there is no place of his rest. But his Logos, through whom he made all things, who is his Power and Wisdom, assuming the role [τὸ πρόσωπον] of the Father and Lord of the universe, was present in paradise in the role [ἐν προσώπῳ] of God and conversed with Adam. For the divine scripture itself teaches us that Adam said he “heard the voice.” What is the “voice” but the Logos of God, who is also his Son? – not as the poets and mythographers describe sons of gods begotten of sexual union, but as the truth describes the Logos, always innate [ἐνδιάθετον] in the heart of God.... He did not deprive himself of the Logos but generated the Logos and constantly converses with his Logos.

And in making reference to John (1:1–3), Theophilus continues quite in the Philonic vein, but the text may imply more than what he intended to say, namely that the Logos is a pneumatic being:

Since the Logos is God and has derived his nature from God, whenever the Father of the universe wills to do so he sends him into some place where he is present and is heard and seen.⁹¹

Theophilus thus is ambiguous about Logos and Wisdom (Sophia) and the Holy Spirit (Pneuma). But he defines his Triad as God the Father, Logos, and Wisdom and considers these entities as powers rather than as individuals.⁹²

The question arises now whether Justin thought that “His Son [God’s Son]” who is “properly called Son, the Logos who was with him and was begotten before all things” was eternal or not. It seems that this question did not exist for Justin, who was interested in proving that the Logos is the Second divine Being, the Son of God, subordinate and dependent on the First God, the Father. Such was Justin’s interpretation of the term Son of God found in the Gospels. Justin nowhere formulates explicitly the concept of eternal begetting of the Logos as Philo does, but insists only on the begetting of a numerically distinct Logos/Christ, which existed already before the Beginning, that is, before creation.

⁸⁹ Ibid., II.18.

⁹⁰ Ibid., II. 13.

⁹¹ Ibid., II. 22.

⁹² Ibid., II.15.

If we assume, however, in accordance with Platonic doctrine, that time was created with the world, then in the timeless existence of God begetting of his Logos, “the Firstborn of all creations and the beginning of everything”⁹³ must also be “timeless,” thus eternal. Justin names this begotten Logos as the Christ/Messiah, thus changing also the whole concept of the Jewish Christ/Messiah. In Justin’s mind the event of the begetting of the Logos was linked with the creation of the world (the begotten Logos was the instrument of creation), and the event of the incarnation of the Logos was linked with the beginning of the Christian people.

Justin is one of the first to develop a doctrine of the preexistent, begotten Christ who is God, though he acknowledged that not all believers shared this view:

For, my friends, there are some of our race who acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, but claim that he has a merely human origin. I naturally disagree with such persons, nor would I agree with them even if the majority of those who share my opinions were to say so.⁹⁴

In the next sequence of events, this begotten Logos, identified as the Son of God and Christ, “became a man and was crucified”;⁹⁵ he took “shape and became man and was called Jesus Christ.” Jesus is further characterized by Justin as both Son and Apostle of God, teacher and ruler, who was foretold by prophets, among them, by Moses; he is in the second place after God.⁹⁶

Next Justin identifies the Son of God with Wisdom for the Son of God called Jesus, even if he were only a man by ordinary generation, yet, on account of his Wisdom he is worthy to be called the Son of God.⁹⁷ Jesus as the Son of God was generated by the will of God, as Justin states: “Jesus Christ is the only proper Son who has been begotten by God, being his Logos and First-begotten, and Power; and, becoming man according to his will.”⁹⁸ Here we have still another characteristic of the Logos-Christ-Son-Wisdom, that is, Power. And Justin asserts that through the Power of the Logos, according to the will of God, the Father and Lord of all, the Son was born of a virgin as man, and was named Jesus, and was crucified, and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven.⁹⁹

Justin thus believes that the Logos is the Beginning of the universe, and quoting the passage from Genesis (1:26–28), Justin claims that before the creation of man “He [God] spoke with One endowed with reason, and

⁹³ *Dialogue with Trypho* CXXXVIII; Rémi Brague, *Du temps chez Platon et Aristote. Quatre études* (Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 1982).

⁹⁴ *Dialogue with Trypho* XLVIII.

⁹⁵ *I Apol.* XLII, V.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, XLII, V, XXXII, XL, XIII.

⁹⁷ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXI, LXII.

⁹⁸ *I Apol.* XXIII.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, XLVI.

different in number from himself.”¹⁰⁰ And then Justin again gives a review of the whole Old Testament claiming that it is the testimony of the appearances of the Logos in the past.

Justin believed that it was the Logos who appeared already to humans in the events described in the Old Testament. Commenting on Exodus (3:1–6), Justin says that it was the Logos who appeared to Moses as an Angel of God and not the Father.¹⁰¹ In the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin clearly states that in the Old Testament prophecies “there is, and there is said to be, another God and Lord subject to the Maker of all things; who is also called an Angel because he announces to men whatsoever the Maker of all things – above whom there is no other God – wishes to announce them”; and “He who is said to have appeared to Abraham, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and who is called God, is distinct from him who made all things, numerically, I mean, not [distinct] in will.”¹⁰²

Two Generations of the Logos the Son

Defending the Christian doctrine against the doubts expressed by the Gentiles, Justin makes a comparison between the Greek stories of the divine sons of Jupiter and the Christian Son of God, emphasizing:

We assert that the Word [Logos], our Teacher Jesus Christ, ... was not born as the result of sexual relations, and that he was crucified, died, arose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, we propose nothing new or different from that which you say about the so-called sons of Jupiter.¹⁰³

Justin certainly talks about two generations of the Son, first by emanation from God of a pneumatic being named Logos and Christ, and the second in his earthly form as a man named Jesus.

But referring to the begetting of Logos before all time,¹⁰⁴ which escapes any normal physical analogy, Justin makes a comparison between Christians who declare that the Word [Logos] was begotten of God not in the ordinary manner and Gentiles who claim that Mercury is announcing the Word [Logos] of God.¹⁰⁵ Justin wants to assert here that the Logos has an incorporeal and angelic character, and though its origin is described by the terms used for ordinary generation in the corporeal animal world, it has a different character, as the Greeks themselves assert. But the terminology taken from the animal world to describe the generation of the Logos from God leads Justin to assert

¹⁰⁰ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXII.

¹⁰¹ *I Apol.* LXIII.

¹⁰² *Dialogue with Trypho* LVI.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, XXI.

¹⁰⁴ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXI, CXXVIII.

¹⁰⁵ *I Apol.* XXII.

that the Logos must be divine,¹⁰⁶ that is, of incorporeal substance as is God. Such an assumption was common in Greek philosophy, that the progeny of one species is always the same species.

As to the mechanism of this begetting of the Christ, Justin is using basically three metaphors: of lighting a torch from another torch or kindling a fire from fire, of light emanating from a source, and of giving forth anything rational in the form of speech, utterance.¹⁰⁷ These are figures of dissemination and emanation of the power from God, and Justin, not unlike Philo, is using the metaphor of expansion, without diminishing the substance of the Godhead. Justin's theory of Christ (begotten Logos) and his view on the generation of Christ are summarized in a passage from the *Dialogue*:

God has begotten of himself a certain rational Power as a Beginning before all other creatures. The Holy Spirit [*Pneuma*] 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 [Logos]. 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 both that He performs the Father's will and that he was begotten by an act of the Father's.¹⁰⁸

The Greeks represented the generation of their gods from the gods themselves, or by interaction with the humans in terms of either animal generation or miraculous intervention. Justin believed that he could expect from the Hellenes an assertion that the first generation of the Logos could not involve a sexual process, but the second could produce doubts among the Hellenes because Jesus, though he was the Son of God, was "only a man by ordinary generation."¹⁰⁹

In modern interpretation, we would say that the interaction between the "incorporeal" God and the "corporeal" human could not be physical. This, however, escaped the mentality of Justin, the authors of the Gospels, and the ancient Hellenes, because they understood divine beings as constituted of a divine substance, *pneuma*, therefore "physical." Authors of the Gospels would not have to assert that Mary was a virgin to avoid sexual connotation in the generation of Jesus if they had the modern post-Cartesian concept of "spirit" (modern *pneuma*). They believed, however, as well as Justin himself,¹¹⁰ in the pneumatic God and in the real existence of the pneumatic Greek gods and their modes of operation, and this is why we find a touch of uneasiness in the description of the generation of Jesus in the Gospels.¹¹¹ The Greeks, in

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, X; *Dialogue with Trypho* CXXIV, CXXVI, CXXVII.

¹⁰⁷ *Dialogue with Trypho* CXXVIII.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, LXI.

¹⁰⁹ *I Apol.* XXII.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, XXII.

¹¹¹ Luke (1:35) describes the generation of Jesus in this way: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." Matthew (1:20) is less restrained and implies direct sexual intervention: "The child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

explaining the generation of the sons of Jupiter, were often less euphemistic than the authors who wrote later versions of the Gospels.

Justin emphasizes the difference in the manner of generation between the Son of God and the sons of Jupiter as one of the aspects of his superiority:

And if we declared that the Word [Logos] of God was begotten of God not in the ordinary, but in an extraordinary manner, as we stated above, this may be compared to your claim that Mercury is the announcing Word [Logos] of God. And should any one object that he [Christ] was crucified, this indignity may be compared to that of Jupiter's sons, as you call them, who suffered¹¹² as indicated above. Their sufferings at death are said to have been not all similar, but different, so that not even his unusual manner of suffering was inferior to theirs. But, ... he is their superior also in this regard, for one is proved superior by his actions.¹¹³

Previously, Justin already made a claim, quite in the Greek and Hebrew spirit, that even if Jesus were not divine by generation, but only a man by common human generation, he would be worthy to be called the Son of God, because of his wisdom. And Justin continues:

If we state that he is born of a virgin, this may be comparable to what you admit of Perseus. When we say that he cured the lame, the paralytics, and those blind from birth, and raised the dead to life, we seem to attribute to him actions similar to those said to have been performed by Aesculapius.¹¹⁴

OTHER THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINES

Creation of the World, Angels, Demons

Justin seems to believe, following Plato and Philo, that matter was eternal, preexisting in a disorganized, amorphous state, ready to receive shape and qualities. He claims that God instructed humans that in the beginning he created in his goodness everything out of shapeless matter for the sake of men.¹¹⁵ Moreover, Justin, just as Athenagoras (fl. ca. 177),¹¹⁶ explicitly denies the creation *ex nihilo* in the story presented in Genesis and also claims that the Plato account of the creation of the world is plagiarized from Moses:

By the Word [Logos] of God the whole world was made out of the substance [ἐκ τῶν ὑποκειμένων] spoken before by Moses.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Arnobius of Sicca, *The Case against the Pagans (Adversus Nationes)*, newly translated and annotated by George E. McCracken (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1949, vol. 1; Cork: Mercier Press, 1949, vol. 2), I.41.

¹¹³ *I Apol.* XXII.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XXII.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, X.

¹¹⁶ Athenagoras, *Legatio and De Resurrectione*, edited and translated by William R. Schoedel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), X.3, XV.2, XIX.4.

¹¹⁷ *I Apol.* LIX.

This certainly implies that the world was not created *ex nihilo*, and Justin uses the Stoic term for primary matter, ὑποκειμένον = substratum. In Genesis 1:2, this substratum is the primordial ocean [תהו]. Justin wants to emphasize that the Mosaic and Platonic doctrines of creation are identical.

Justin likewise identified the Platonic cosmic World Soul, which is generated by the Demiurge in *Timaeus*,¹¹⁸ but is eternal in Middle Platonism,¹¹⁹ with his Son of God (Logos as the Second God),¹²⁰ and also by quoting Plato's "The Third about the Third,"¹²¹ he imputed to Plato the knowledge of the existence of the divine being placed in the third place after God, corresponding to Justin's Prophetic Spirit (Pneuma). But this was Justin's Christian reading into Plato's thought about the mystery of the three principles in the universe. Eusebius later read it as a premonition of the Trinity.¹²²

In considering why God created the world, Justin answers, "God did not create the world without a purpose, but he did so for the sake of mankind."¹²³ This idea is common in ancient Hebrew and Greek cultures.¹²⁴ And, as it was an accepted view of Hellenistic Judaism and of Jesus himself, God acted out of his goodness.¹²⁵

God appointed angels (just as Plato assigned this role to the Greek lesser gods) to take care of the human race:

But the angels transgressed this order, and were captivated by love of women, and produced children who are called demons. And besides later they enslaved the human race to themselves, partly by magical writings, and partly by fears and punishments which they occasioned, and partly by teaching them to offer sacrifices, incense, and libations, which they needed after they were enslaved with lustful passions; and among people they sowed murders, wars, adulteries, intemperate deeds and every evil.¹²⁶

This idea of angels who were to take care of men and of all things under heaven was not new. It was widely spread in Hebrew tradition and adopted by Christian theology. But Justin's account is the first record stating that the origin of demons was a result of a union between evil angels and human women. And both fathers and children of these fallen angels are called demons.

¹¹⁸ Plato, *Timaeus* 36bc.

¹¹⁹ Alcinoüs, *The Handbook of Platonism (Didaskalikos)*, translated with an introduction and commentary by John Dillon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), XIV.35.

¹²⁰ *I Apol.* LX.

¹²¹ Plato, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1956–1960), Tomes 1–13, texte établi et traduit par Albert Rivaud, *Ep.* 2.312; E. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.1.8.

¹²² Eusebius, *Werke Die Praeparatio evangelica*, herausgegeben von Édouard des Places (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982, 1983), vol. 2, XI.20.

¹²³ *II Apol.* IV. Cf. *II Apol.* V; *Dialogue with Trypho* XLI.

¹²⁴ Gen. 1:26–31; Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, translated by Horace C. P. McGregor (*De nat. deorum*) (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 2.133, 154, 155–162.

¹²⁵ *I Apol.* X. Cf. Philo, *Cher.* 127.

¹²⁶ *II Apol.* V. Cf. *I Apol.* V, XIV.

In the Hebrew tradition, the union between angels and women produced giants (Gen. 6:2).¹²⁷ And the chief among the demons was Satan, whose name, as Justin explains, derives from the Hebrew and Syrian *Sata* = apostate, and *Nas* = serpent.¹²⁸ By introducing evil angels and demons that had been begotten by them and brought all evil on men, Justin defends the goodness of God, who could not create evil.

Therefore, for the sake of believing men, and for the destruction of the demons, Jesus was conceived according to the will of God the Father.¹²⁹ The purpose of his coming is to teach and guide mankind and subdue the demons.¹³⁰ They will be condemned and “cast out into darkness.” In Justin’s theology, men were born with moral freedom, and they accept a new birth at the moment of baptism. He accepts the statement of Plato, “The blame is his who chooses, but God is blameless.”¹³¹ Every man is responsible for his actions but can be saved from condemnation: “by water [i.e., baptism], faith, and wood [i.e., Christ], those who are afore-prepared, and who repent of the sins which they have committed.”¹³² Justin ascribed sins committed by men to the influence of demons; man fell because of the serpent and acquired “evil desire.”¹³³ Such a doctrine of human depravity, free will, and of no inheritance of sin was common to the Jewish, Hellenistic, and early Christian traditions.

According to Justin, God also delayed the destruction of the world by which the wicked angels, and demons, and men shall cease to exist, because of the seed of the Christians,¹³⁴ waiting for repentance and “the completion of the quota of those whom he foreknows to be good and virtuous.”¹³⁵ Thus now, according to Justin, Christians were the new chosen people.

Moreover, in one theory, Justin believed in a destruction of the world that would assume the form of a final cosmic conflagration, as was also described by the Stoics and predicted by Sibyl and Hystaspes.¹³⁶ But it would be preceded by the inexplicable rule of a thousand years of Christ in Jerusalem, and afterward

¹²⁷ Philo, *Gig.* IV. 16; Pappias, frag. 4; *I Enoch* 31:6; Athenagoras, *Suppl.* XXIV:3; Tertullian, *Apol.* 22.

¹²⁸ *Dialogue with Trypho* CIII. Cf. *Dialogue with Trypho* CXXIV; *I Apol.* XXVIII.

¹²⁹ *II Apol.* VI. Cf. *I Apol.* XIV.

¹³⁰ *I Apol.* XIV. Cf. *I Apol.* XV, XVI; *Dialogue with Trypho* LXXVI, LXXXV; *I Apol.* XLV.

¹³¹ Plato, *Republic* X. 617e; *I Apol.* 44.

¹³² *Dialogue with Trypho* CXXXVIII, CXL, CXLI.

¹³³ *I Apol.* X, LVI–LXI; *II Apol.* V; *Dialogue with Trypho* LXXXVIII, XCII.

¹³⁴ *II Apol.* VII; *I Apol.* XXVIII, XLV.

¹³⁵ *I Apol.* XLV.

¹³⁶ Sibylline Oracles were a collection of writings of Jewish and Christian traditions by several authors. Jewish themes are dated from the Maccabean revolt to the early second century c.e. Christian traditions are from the third century c.e. Hystaspes was a Persian Magus who is thought to have lived and issued oracles during the time of Zoroaster and is quoted by Clement of Alexandria and Lactantius. *I Apol.* XX; *Orac. Sibylline* 2.196; *SVF*, II.1047, 1055; Philo, *De aet. mundi* 46.

the general, and, in short, the eternal, resurrection and judgment of all men would take place.¹³⁷ And he also believed that human destiny was not ruled by blind fate but that each man by free choice can act rightly or sin, as God at the beginning created angels and men with a free will.¹³⁸

Justin believed that salvation would be achieved by those who conduct their life rightfully. And this salvation consisted in gaining admission to the eschatological future kingdom of heaven, which was described in one theory as the ideal kingdom of eternal life established by Christ on earth after his *parousia* for the resurrected and righteous Christians.¹³⁹ At the same time, the activity of demons will cease and they will be cast into eternal fire for punishment.¹⁴⁰

Justin lists several conditions necessary for obtaining salvation. One must accept the Gospel message and recognize Christ; one must repent one's sins; one must be baptized; and one must live a pure life thereafter until death. These were conditions *sine qua non*.¹⁴¹

For Justin, in accordance with the synoptic Gospels, man was responsible for his actions and deeds, as Justin did not know the Pauline-Lutheran conception of grace.¹⁴² Salvation for Justin comes to those who accept the incarnated Christ because they mystically import the power of God through him.¹⁴³ Jews, however, except those who lived before Christ according to the Law, vainly look for salvation.¹⁴⁴ The saving power is imparted by baptism, which Justin considers an illumination (φωτισμός), for the baptized person learns right things and receives the whole Logos. At the same time, a remission of sins committed before is given.¹⁴⁵ The baptism is, of course, adult baptism and of free choice and not one performed on newly born infants.

As to the incarnation and crucifixion, Justin is less clear: by the power of the crucifixion, the demons were to be overcome by its mystery, and exorcism¹⁴⁶ as well as a certain purification that was to take place, the "cleansing by his blood those who believe in him."¹⁴⁷

The doctrine of angels and demons Justin took from the Hebrew tradition,¹⁴⁸ and it was maintained in the Justinian version by all church fathers and found

¹³⁷ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXXXI.

¹³⁸ *II Apol.* VII; *I Apol.* XX.

¹³⁹ *Dialogue with Trypho* C, CXL, CXXX, CXXXI.

¹⁴⁰ *II Apol.* VIII.

¹⁴¹ *Dialogue with Trypho* XLIV, CXXXVIII; *I Apol.* XLIII, XLIV, XXVIII, XL, LXI; *Dialogue with Trypho* XXVI, XI, XL, XLVII, XCV, CVIII.

¹⁴² *I Apol.* XVI; *Dialogue with Trypho* CXL.

¹⁴³ *Dialogue with Trypho* CII, CXVI, CXXXVIII; *II Apol.* VIII, XIII.

¹⁴⁴ *Dialogue with Trypho* XLIV–XLVII.

¹⁴⁵ *I Apol.* LXI; *Dialogue with Trypho* CXXIII, XCI, CXXXIV.

¹⁴⁶ *Dialogue with Trypho* XXX, XLIX, LIV, LXXXV, XCI, XCIV, CXXV, CXXX, CXXXI.

¹⁴⁷ *I Apol.* XXXII; *Dialogue with Trypho* XIII, XLIV, LIV, CXI.

¹⁴⁸ Gen. 6:1–4; *I Enoch* 6:1–2; Ps. 95 (96):5.

its practical application in exorcism, widely practiced in Christianity. It even plays a significant role in modern Christianity. Angels were supposed to come from the “Stream of Fire,” which in turn derived “from the sweat of the beasts of the Chariot of God.”¹⁴⁹ Justin simply followed this tradition, using the metaphor of the rays of light emanating from the Father as the fiery stream from the central source. In the Hebrew tradition, angels were made of fire and require some nourishment of a celestial substance, such as fire or manna, the food of angels, which they absorb.¹⁵⁰ All the powers, angels, demons, Logos, and God were to Justin *pneuma*. All the secondary pneumatic beings were not omniscient and much inferior to God. They had, however, freedom of choice, and some, according to Justin, needed salvation.¹⁵¹

Angels thus were generated, begotten, as numerically different beings from God by his will in exactly the same manner as the Logos was. The passage of Justin in which he claims that angels were the object of worship contradicts his other statements that there is only One God the Father. Goodenough tries to explain that in the Diaspora this was a popular practice, and there is even a reference in Philo to Moses praying to the divine powers.¹⁵² Philo recognized the existence of such beings, angels (and demons), which are as God’s powers permeating the air, but he did not emphasize them, and they were always subordinate to the one God.¹⁵³

The Soul, the Resurrection, and Punishment

Justin believed, as did most Jews, that God shaped man from material elements by himself;¹⁵⁴ that man is composed of three parts: the body, the soul, and the divine element, which gives life and imparts reason and which Justin calls *pneuma* of life (ζωτικὸν πνεῦμα). Justin, however, nowhere explains explicitly what a soul is. We can deduce his views by careful analysis of his text. The soul is a seat of sensation of the body, the seat of emotions, desires, intelligence, and hope, and therefore determines personality.¹⁵⁵ He attributes to the soul the power of sustaining life, the so-called animating power, but

The soul partakes of life since God wills it to live.... For to live is not its attribute, as it is God’s.¹⁵⁶

This is a common view in the Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures and was also adopted in Genesis. But Justin distinguishes between the transcendental

¹⁴⁹ Goodenough, *Theology*, p. 172.

¹⁵⁰ Heb. 1:7; *Dialogue with Trypho* LVII; Ps. 78:25.

¹⁵¹ *Dialogue with Trypho* VII, XXX, LXXVI, CXL, CXLI.

¹⁵² *Plant.* XII.46–47.

¹⁵³ *Conf.* 33.168–34.175; *Gig.* II 6; *Som.* I. 232.

¹⁵⁴ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXII.

¹⁵⁵ *I Apol.* XII, XVIII, XXI.

¹⁵⁶ *Dialogue with Trypho* VI.

God, which is an absolute Mind (νοῦς), and the “regal mind” (νοῦς βασιλικός), which is Justin’s Logos and corresponds to the Logos of Philo, to the World Soul of Plato and of Alcinoüs, or to the Second Intellect or God of Numenius. This is an intermediary and a connection between God and all living creatures. Moreover, this “regal mind” contemplates God and is the source of life in everything that exists.¹⁵⁷ Justin agrees with Plato and Middle Platonists that through the mind man can conceive of God and the mind is given to the soul as the highest principle in man.¹⁵⁸ Next Justin claims that this regal mind is a universal mind and the souls of all living animals and men are the same and are part of it.

Justin here fused the intellectual principle (νοῦς) with the vivifying principle in one divine principle, *pneuma*. The distinction, however, between the souls of animals and the souls of men depends on the nature of the relative bodies. The souls of animals are more tightly entrapped in their bodies than the souls of men, and therefore only men, because of their moral righteousness, are able to rise above matter and experience God. We can deduce that Justin assumed that the soul, as created and living only by the will of God, cannot be a living principle by itself; but, because it partakes of life, which, according to Justin is God, by being provided with a part of the “regal mind,” which is also called the spermatic Logos,¹⁵⁹ it is a part of God’s substance, the “*pneuma of life*” (ζωτικὸν πνεῦμα), if we agree to use this technical Greek term.¹⁶⁰ Such concepts were quite common also in Gnostic Christian doctrines contemporary with Justin.¹⁶¹ This divine mind enters “into souls well-disposed on account of their affinity and desire of seeing him [God].”¹⁶²

The source of Justin’s theory of the higher nature of the human mind as the effluence of the Logos can be traced to Stoic philosophy via Numenius. And it seems that Justin refined the biblical view that God animates living creatures by breathing into them his own *pneuma*,¹⁶³ which, when united with the body, produces a vivifying agent, the soul (Ψυχή or שֵׁבַע), residing in the blood.¹⁶⁴ Hint of such a trichotomic doctrine is present in the Epistle to the Thessalonians (5:23). Justin contrasts the belief of the Greeks in the Orphic and Platonic concept of a separate soul surviving after death, with the

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., IV.

¹⁵⁸ *Timaeus* 41–42; Alcinoüs XVI.2–15.

¹⁵⁹ *II Apol.* VIII, X, XIII; *I Apol.* XLVI.

¹⁶⁰ *Dialogue with Trypho* IV, V. A similar doctrine or relation between the soul and *pneuma* was postulated by the Gnostics: *Trimorphic Protennoia* 40.15; 40.29–41.32.

¹⁶¹ For example, Protennoia (the First Thought of the Deity) says: “I am . . . the Spirit (Pneuma) that now dwells in the soul.” *Trimorphic Protennoia*, translated by John D. Turner in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, James M. Robinson, general editor (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), XIII.I.41.21–24.

¹⁶² *Dialogue with Trypho* IV.

¹⁶³ Gen. 2:7; Philo, *Leg. All.* I.39, 42.

¹⁶⁴ Deut. 12:23–24; Lev. 17:11–14; Gen. 9:4–5.

Christian/Hebrew belief in the ultimate resurrection of the body and soul. He reminds the Greeks that, though the souls depart the bodies, according to their own belief, “even after death the souls remain in a state of sensibility.”¹⁶⁵ And he does it in order to point out to the Greeks the eternal punishment that will affect the wicked, as was also indicated by their own authors (Empedocles, Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates) and the oracles (Amphilochus, Dodona, Pytho).

In another theory, Justin postulated that, after death, these vivifying agents, the souls, do not die, presumably retaining their conscious state and the *pneuma*.¹⁶⁶ And Justin claims to have proved this from the ancient accounts of the contacts with the dead, from necromancy, from divination from the entrails of the aborted children, and from madmen and demoniacs possessed by the souls of the wicked dead men.¹⁶⁷ The souls of pious men remain in some better place, and the souls of the unjust and wicked remain in a worse one, presumably being punished in some physical way while waiting for the resurrection and final judgment. Then the souls of those men worthy of God will never die, but others with their bodies will be punished, for as long as God will wish them to exist and to be punished.¹⁶⁸ Afterward, they will die (be annihilated), their bodies will cease to exist, and their *pneuma*, the divine element in the human soul, will return to its original source.¹⁶⁹

There are also contradictory statements in which Justin claims that the punishment of the souls of the wicked will be eternal, even in the eternal fire. The demons will be punished in the eternal fire as well.¹⁷⁰

Then Justin proceeds to explain that Christians accept the Hebrew doctrine of the resurrection, believing that the souls will be resurrected with the same bodies, stating that we expect to receive again our own bodies, though they be dead and cast into the earth, for we maintain that with God nothing is impossible.¹⁷¹

And Justin tries to explain that though resurrection seems impossible, it is possible and credible the same as it is possible that from a small drop of human seed bones and sinews and flesh be formed into a shape such as we see.

Those who have lived wickedly will be cast, in accordance with a promise made by Jesus Christ, into Gehenna (Hades) “soul and body.”¹⁷²

Justin uses the Hebrew word Gehenna, which in the apocalyptic literature was used to describe the place of moral and corporeal punishment for apostate

¹⁶⁵ *I Apol.* XVIII.

¹⁶⁶ *Dialogue with Trypho* V, CV; *I Apol.* XVIII.

¹⁶⁷ *I Apol.* XVIII.

¹⁶⁸ *Dialogue with Trypho* V.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, VI.

¹⁷⁰ *I Apol.* XVIII; *II Apol.* I, VIII; *Dialogue with Trypho* CXXX.

¹⁷¹ *I Apol.* XVIII.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, XIX.

Jews¹⁷³ and in the New Testament literature as the place into which the wicked are cast after the final judgment and always associated with the imagery of fire.¹⁷⁴

The punishment is described very vividly and not at all by moral means but by real fire. When referring to Isaiah 1:16–20, Justin writes:

The words, “The sword shall devour you,” do not mean that the disobedient will be put to death by swords, but that the sword of God is the fire of which those who choose to do evil shall be made the fuel.¹⁷⁵

The virtuous, however, and Christ-like, that is, those who have become Christians, shall live with God free from all pain.¹⁷⁶ And the judgment will be passed by Christ himself.¹⁷⁷

In a separate treatise, *On Resurrection*, ascribed to Justin, he tries to justify why God could not neglect the body and after death allow it to pass to nonentity. Justin’s argument follows thus. Because God created the body, and the body itself is valuable in God’s sight and not the cause of sin by itself, it could not be destroyed forever after death. God promised everlasting life to flesh as well because man is body and soul together and not any of these separate. Therefore, it would be absurd to save one and not the other. Moreover, Justin claims that Jesus healed to show what the resurrection is – he raised both the soul and the body, he rose himself in the flesh to show the resurrection of the flesh – and that those who believe will be saved.

And Justin strongly rejects the Greek concepts

that the soul is immortal, but the body mortal, and incapable of being revived[.] For this we used to hear from Pythagoras and Plato, even before we learned the truth.¹⁷⁸

If Christians desire eternal and good life, according to Justin, they will achieve it if they prove by their works to God that they followed him and loved to abide with him.¹⁷⁹ The wicked will be punished “in the same bodies united to their souls which are now to undergo eternal punishment.”¹⁸⁰

The early Christians expected the coming of the Kingdom of God as the earthly rule of Jesus during their lifetime. Such was the belief of the Christians

¹⁷³ 1 (*Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch* 27.2, 3; 26, 27, 90–104, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), vol. 1, 5–100.

¹⁷⁴ Matt. 5:18–19, 22; Mark 9:45; Rev. 19:20.

¹⁷⁵ *I Apol.* XLIV; *II Apol.* I; *I Apol.* XX.

¹⁷⁶ *II Apol.* I.

¹⁷⁷ *I Apol.* VIII, XLIX.

¹⁷⁸ *On Resurrection* VII–X.

¹⁷⁹ *I Apol.* VIII.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, VIII; cf. *II Apol.* VIII. While Plato prescribed a punishment for the souls for a limited time only (*Phaedrus* 249a3; *Republic* 10.615a8); Justin prescribed it for resurrected bodies in eternal fire after a millennium. *Dialogue with Trypho*, LXXXI.

and of all apologists up to the third century. This is confirmed by Eusebius,¹⁸¹ who quotes the testimony of Hegeppus about the Christians who, in order to detract the suspicion of the Romans during interrogations, pretended that this kingdom was not of this world but of a heavenly one. In his eschatology, Justin believed with the rest of the early Christians that Christ was to come in the very near future during their lifetime. Justin believed that those who are unjust and intemperate shall be punished in eternal fire, but those who are virtuous shall dwell in a state that is free from suffering. And the evidence or proof for the second coming Justin supposedly found in the Old Testament, ascribing everything that the Jews said about their Messiah to the second coming.¹⁸² But there are many contradictions in the Justin description of events that were to happen afterward. In one version, after the resurrection the saints with their bodies would remain in the rebuilt Jerusalem eternally.¹⁸³ The Judgment would come after the resurrection.¹⁸⁴ In another version, Jesus would rule for a millennium, and afterward the world would be destroyed in a final conflagration.¹⁸⁵ All men would be judged, and some would be destined for an everlasting kingdom, and others for an everlasting fire.¹⁸⁶ Angels would be judged, too, and demons would be sent to an everlasting fire.¹⁸⁷ Justin in his eschatology presented contradictory and completely uncritical views that represented the popular beliefs of early Christians devoid of any critical thinking and philosophical training.

Summarizing Justin's doctrine, we may say that he visualized the Logos (Word) as begotten, that is, generated and preexistent with God before the formation of the world. This Logos was "begotten" or "came forth from the Father" by the will of God, as a pneumatic being, the Son of God, called the Firstborn and Christ and, because of its prophetic function, the Holy Spirit. This Christ or begotten Logos, in turn, became the man Jesus by being born of a virgin by his own action or the action of the Holy Spirit (Pneuma). There are contradictory statements in Justin, and he is not clear whether the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) is a third pneumatic being or the same as the Logos Pneuma.

The names given to these various pneumatic identities were taken from biblical tradition and fanciful early Christian exegesis of the Old Testament and from the various functions ascribed to the Logos current in the time of Justin. The concept of the Son of God had its roots in the Old Testament and Hebrew culture, but in the Hellenistic environment, the term lost its original meaning and was interpreted literally in the Greek fashion, designating either

¹⁸¹ Eusebius, *H.E.* 3,20.4.

¹⁸² *Dialogue with Trypho* CXI, XIV, XXXI-XXXIII.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, CXXXII, LXXX, CXIII; *I Apol.* XIX, XVIII.

¹⁸⁴ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXXXI.

¹⁸⁵ *I Apol.* XX, XXI, LXVIII, XLV; *II Apol.* VII; *Dialogue with Trypho* CXVIII, CXXXII.

¹⁸⁶ *I Apol.* XII; *Dialogue with Trypho* XLVII, CXX.

¹⁸⁷ *Dialogue with Trypho* CXLI; *I Apol.* XXVIII, XIX, LII.

a being derived from a deity or a being created in the earthly world by the intervention of God. Jesus combined both these characteristics because he was an incarnation of the divine “begotten” Logos and man by nature of his origin. Moreover, he was originally identified with the Jewish Messiah, but by being identified with the Greek cosmic Logos, the Jewish Messiah became the Greek Savior.

Justin was one of the most original, though uncritical, thinkers in Christianity and one of the first who interpreted mythical and mystical claims of the Christian movement in terms of the current philosophical and religious Hellenistic doctrines. His ideas were further developed and modified by his successors in a continuing process of the evolution of religion.

Justin Martyr and the Metaphysical Triad

JUSTIN'S METAPHYSICAL TRIAD

The Father

In defending Christians against accusations from the Hellenes that they were “atheists,” Justin presents the argument that they confess the belief and worship the Triad, “Most True God who is the Father, and the Son, and the Prophetic Spirit [πνεῦμα προφητικόν],”¹ though one feels that he senses a conflict between this formulation and the assertion of believing in one God.

The Triadic formula is also used in the baptism, which was interpreted as a “rebirth,” “remission of the sins formerly committed,” and a sort of moral illumination with the divine force, full Logos. Other instances of this formula are the eucharistic prayer and blessing offered at the ceremonial communal meal. These passages remind one quite literally of the writing of Numenius. Justin differs from Numenius in that he ascribes biblical appellations to each divine entity, whereas Numenius describes them in philosophical Platonic categories. Moreover, the Second divine entity is represented by an individual, Jesus Christ who, from the Jewish Messiah, became now the Greek Savior. These passages seem to be an expression of a belief in three separate divine entities with three different names. But one has to analyze what Justin says further about these three names to find out what the relationship is between them.

The concept of God among early Christians was the same as that represented by the Hebrew biblical texts, since they considered themselves Jews. This God was intensely personal, holy, righteous, demanding devotion, and worthy of worship and reverence. He was represented as a ferocious, vengeful, and cruel defender of his tribe, a caring father, a jealous ruler, a strict, merciless, and vindictive legalist, and a severe moral judge. In Hellenistic Judaism God

¹ *I Apol.* VI, XIII.

acquired, in addition, certain characteristics typical of Greek metaphysical thought, such as his cosmic function and transcendentalism, without losing his previous characteristics. Such an interpretation of God became useful and more appropriate later for Pauline “Christians,” when Paul introduced an ontological intermediary between God and man in the form of the pneumatic being, Christ. At the same time, the presumed revelation of Christ replaced the Torah as the ruling moral and ritual law.

Justin basically inherited from Hellenistic Judaism such a mixed Greco-Jewish picture of the deity. God the Father is described by Justin as the Father of virtues, or the Father and Creator of all, the only unbegotten and impassible God, unchangeable and immovable in accordance with his Middle Platonic conception of God.²

The concept of an unmoved God, the first mover, was first proposed by Aristotle and brought into Middle Platonism by Eudorus of Alexandria (fl. ca. 25 B.C.E.) who emphasized the transcendence of God (the supreme God) as “The One.”³ By this Justin, as well as Philo, denied any spatial movement, spatial determination, or change of nature to God⁴ and intended to refute the Stoic concept of an immanent God and identification of God with the world. But this concept remains more a philosophical notion than a religious assertion because neither Philo nor Justin adheres to it, but each represents God, in accordance with the very strong Hebrew tradition, as remaining “in a place to himself,”⁵ or “remaining in a place wherever it may be” or describing God as one “who is in the heavens” or the “Lord who dwells in heaven.”⁶

The description of God as unbegotten (ἀγέννητος) was commonly used in Greek philosophy with the meaning that God had existence without external source; thus he was a self-causing being.⁷ Justin uses this term to distinguish the existence of God the Father from that of Christ, the Son of God, who had a beginning and a cause.

On the contrary, God is the Maker or Creator himself and there is no higher God than the Creator.⁸ This was a response made to the claim of the Christian Gnostics who, following Platonic doctrines, maintained that the God of the

² Ibid., LXI, LXV, LXVII, VI, VIII, XIV, XXV.

³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.6.1071b4; 7.1072a21 ff., in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited and with introduction by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941); R. E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937); John Dillon, *The Middle Platonism* (London: Duckworth, 1977); Alcinous, *The Handbook of Platonism*, translated with an introduction and commentary by John Dillon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

⁴ *Dialogue with Trypho* III, CXXVII; *Conf.* 27.

⁵ *Leg. All.* I.14. Cf. *Som.* I.11.

⁶ *Dialogue with Trypho* LVI, LX, CXXVII.

⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* II.4.999b7.

⁸ *I Apol.* XVI; *Dialogue with Trypho* XI, LX.

Old Testament as Creator (Demiurge) could not be a true God but a God of evil if he had contact with matter. Therefore, they postulated the existence of another good God of the New Testament as an absolutely transcendent deity and different in kind. Justin, on the contrary, insisted on the continuity of the Old and the New Testaments and the identity of the Gods represented there. Thus, he always describes God as the Maker or Creator (δημιουργός) to the extent that he forgets about the share that he ascribed in the process to the Logos.

And following the Hebrew tradition, Justin declares that he has no name, but because of his good deeds and functions he has several appellations (προσρήσεις) derived from his beneficent deeds.⁹

This namelessness is a consequence of God's being unbegotten, because the name must be given by a predecessor, and no one gives a name to the ineffable [or unutterable, ἄρητος] God.¹⁰ For Philo, names were symbolic of created things and therefore not applicable to an uncreated God.¹¹

By using the term "unutterable" Justin wants to emphasize still more the transcendentality of God, his incomprehensibility and inaccessibility to the human mind. Justin needed a revelation by the Logos/Christ concerning the religious ritual with some moral magic power (e.g., baptism),¹² doctrinal education,¹³ and moral instruction.¹⁴ God in Justin's concept was not a being completely alienated from the world and, as such, had to be active, though unmoved. Following Aristotle's assumption that God, though an Absolute, must have some activity to be useful for mankind,¹⁵ Justin, Philo, and the Middle Platonists ascribed to God the function of thinking and causing existence to all things and, through the intermediary power, the function of administering, forming, and ordering the world. Justin made God the cause of the Second God: "God is the cause of His (the Second God's) power and of His being Lord and God."¹⁶ And paraphrasing Plato, who Justin claims imitated Christians, he implies that God the Father is the First God.¹⁷ Moreover, wanting to contrast the Christian God with that of the Stoics, he emphasized the autonomy and freedom of action of God.¹⁸ But Justin could not explain how a transcendent God could interact with the world without an intermediary.

⁹ *II Apol.* VI.

¹⁰ *I Apol.* LXI.

¹¹ *Mut.* XII, XIV; *Som.* XXXIX; *Mos.* I, XIV.

¹² *I Apol.* LXI.

¹³ *II Apol.* X, XIII.

¹⁴ *I Apol.* XV, XVI.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Λ 6–7.

¹⁶ *Dialogue with Trypho* CXXXIX.

¹⁷ *I Apol.* LX.5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, XIX; *II Apol.* VII; *Dialogue with Trypho* LXXXIV.

The Son

The Second name is the Son, who, according to Justin, “came forth from Him [the Father] and taught us these things [justice, temperance, and other virtues] ... and the Prophetic Spirit [Pneuma] [τὸ προφητικὸν πνεῦμα].”¹⁹ The structure of the sentence indicates that the Son is treated as a separate being different from God (he came from God) and the Prophetic Spirit (Pneuma). This is stressed more when Justin, as if expanding Philo’s theory of the two powers of God, and making reference to Numenius’s Second God, insists on the identification of the Son with a Spirit (incorporeal Pneuma, which was the essence, that is, being and substance of divinity), therefore a separate being, and not only a power (i.e., an attribute) of God:

It is not right, therefore, to understand the Spirit [πνεῦμα, Pneuma] and the Power [δύναμις] of God as anything else than the Logos, who is also the First-begotten of God, as Moses, the previously mentioned Prophet, has stated.²⁰

Justin speaks here as if he tried to correct some erroneous views being spread around. And he explains the identity of the Son using the common philosophical as well as Hellenistic religious term of an intermediary between God and the visible world. The Logos Son is thus a pneumatic effluence from God, which view is confirmed by Justin in his treatment of the spermatic Logos. We learn that the First-begotten, the Son, is the Logos and a Spirit (Pneuma) and the Power of God. More explicitly, and following Philo and the Middle Platonists directly, Justin teaches us that the Son is also the Power and the Logos,

who assumed human flesh and became man in the manner which we shall presently explain.²¹ And it was this Spirit [Pneuma] who came upon the virgin, overshadowed (or rather overpowered) her and, brought it about that she became pregnant, not by sexual intercourse, but by divine power.²²

In the last statements Justin indicates that it was the Logos itself, and not the Holy Spirit (Holy Pneuma), as the Third Divinity, who was the agent of its own incarnation. There are also statements of Justin that suggest directly that Jesus Christ was born through the power of the Logos, which was given to him from the Father.²³ This means that the Logos engineered its own conception by the power received from God the Father.

This strong subordinate relationship between the Son and the Father is still more emphasized when Justin claims that the power of Christ to overcome

¹⁹ *I Apol.* VI.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, XXXIII.

²¹ *Ibid.*, XXXII.

²² *Ibid.*, XXXIII; *Dialogue with Trypho* C. Logos is the Power of God as in *I Apol.* XXIII, XXXII, LX and *II Apol.* X.

²³ *I Apol.* XLVI; *Dialogue with Trypho* XCVIII, CXXXIX.

demons has been given to him by God.²⁴ Moreover, his resurrection was accomplished by the power of God.²⁵ Justin states: “[He, Christ] boasts not in accomplishing anything through his own will or might.”²⁶ Christ, though sinless, was in need of salvation, and this was accomplished by his resurrection. He was in the power of death as every man is, and thus had to descend into Hades, where he waited for his resurrection and return to heaven, where he is preparing for his glorious second coming.²⁷

A tradition that the Power of God and the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) are the same must have been around in Justin’s time.²⁸ It must have represented the oldest Christian/Jewish belief since Justin gives his explanation just before quoting Luke (1:31–35) that Jesus was conceived by the intervention of the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) (τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα). And in the Christian tradition until the end of the fourth century it was maintained that the Logos was the agent of the miraculous conception.²⁹

Jesus’ generation was nothing new in the Hellenic and Mediterranean world where Zeus begat sons and daughters with human women and even without sexual connotations, as Justin himself admits.³⁰ And the virgin birth was chosen as the mechanism of incarnation because this process did not involve a sexual process that was considered a sin.³¹ Jesus thus is called the Son of God in accordance with Greek usage.

But when he is also called the Christ (the Anointed), then reference is made to the Hebrew meaning of the term “Son of God” as the human Messiah and ruler over Jews. And Justin makes a twist expanding the old Hebrew prophecies as referring to the coming of the supernatural cosmic being Christ, which we might term the Christian Messiah, and his rule over the world.³² This cosmic being has now a universal salvation function, which was expected in the Hellenic world. The Jewish Messiah was transformed by Justin into the Greek Savior.

Addressing the Greeks, Justin explains:

When, indeed, we assert that the Logos, our Teacher Jesus Christ, who is the First-begotten of God the Father, was not born as the result of sexual relations ... we

²⁴ *Dialogue with Trypho* XXX, XLIX.

²⁵ In accordance with the Gospel tradition: Jn. 10:18; Matt. 11:27; *Dialogue with Trypho* XCV, C, CVI; *I Apol.* XLV.

²⁶ *Dialogue with Trypho* CI.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, LXXIII, CI, CII, XXXII, XXXVI.

²⁸ *Protevangelium of James* XI.2, in *New Testament Apocrypha*, revised edition by Wilhelm Schneemelger, English translation edited by R. McL. Wilson, vol. I. (Cambridge and Louisville, KY: James Clarke and Westminster John Knox Press, 1991).

²⁹ Tertullian, *Adv. Praxean* XXVI; Cyprian, *De Idol. Van.*; Hilary, *Trin.* II. 24, 26.

³⁰ *I Apol.* XXII.

³¹ *Ibid.*, XXI, XXXIII.

³² *Ibid.*, XXXIII.

propose nothing new or different from that which you say about the so-called sons of Jupiter.³³

Thus, Jesus Christ and the Logos as a pneumatic being, who is the Firstborn, is the same being since “the Logos himself, who assumed a human form ... became man, and was called Jesus Christ.”³⁴ Whereas Philo could not decide whether the Creative Power of God or Logos should become a separate pneumatic being, Justin emphasizes its individuality. Moreover, it became incarnated in the person of Jesus following the usual Greek method of impregnating human women by the action of the Power of God.

We face head-on in these passages a crucial ideological distinction between Hebrew and Greek/Mediterranean³⁵ cultures. The original Hebrew concept of the son of God acquired the Greek meaning. Justin clearly took the term literally; moreover, he equated the biblical (Old and New Testament Messiah/Christ) with the Greek cosmic Logos and that found in the works of Philo of Alexandria.

In the Hebrew culture God could not beget or produce a metaphysical being, his Son. The term son of God was used metaphorically to describe a prominent and Law-abiding figure such as a king, an expected future ruler and moral reformer, a priest, or a prophet embodied in the figure (or figures) of a Messiah(s). In popular Greek culture, gods could have “sons” and “daughters” who sprang from them or were produced by some kind of interaction with or influence on human women, including births from virgins.³⁶

There is also another important issue involved here. The Greek term *pneuma* is translated usually as spirit (from the Latin *spiritus*), and originally it represented the same thing in Latin. In modern languages and usage, the term acquired, however, a different meaning from the original one it had in antiquity and writings of the first Christians. It was a technical term derived from the Stoic philosophy, which described a divine substance, a substance of divine beings – God, angels, souls – and though it was incorporeal (or sometimes corporeal), it was a certain most-tenuous natural substance considered active and intelligent, close to air, cosmic fire, or ether, depending on the philosophical system. This substance was not matter, however, because matter was composed of the four usual elements and considered passive. The concept itself has roots in the Sumerian/Akkadian religious doctrines, from which it was transferred

³³ Ibid., XXI.

³⁴ Ibid., V.

³⁵ William Sanday, *Divine Overruling* (Edinburgh: T. Clark & T. Clark, 1920), p. 41.

³⁶ Justin himself gives ample descriptions of the generations of Greek gods and divine heroes. *I Apol.* XXI, XXII; *Dialogue with Trypho* LXIX, LXX; Stanley E. Porter, ed., *The Messiah in the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007). It is a collection of lectures presented at the H. H. Bingham Colloquium in the New Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, in 2004. This publication presents a gamut of views on the issue of the Messiahs in various traditions.

to the Hebrew Bible.³⁷ The term is an exact equivalent of the term רוח (*ruach*) (breath, wind) in Hebrew when not used in its metaphorical meaning. God was something very tenuous, but in spite of the attribute given to him as being unconfined (ἀχώρητος), was represented in Greek, Hebrew, and Christian cultures as located in a physically limited space, the heaven, which was also the abode of all other divine beings, and made of the incorporeal, tenuous substance.³⁸ Theophilus (fl. ca. 180), bishop of Antioch, clearly illustrated the situation when he wrote in his survived discourse *To Autolytus* referring to the myth of creation:

The “spirit borne over the water” was the one given by God to give life to the creation, like the soul in man, when he mingled tenuous elements together (for the spirit is tenuous and the water is tenuous), so that the spirit might nourish the water and the water with the spirit might nourish the creation by penetrating it from all sides. The unique spirit occupied the place of light and was situated between the water and the heaven so that, so to speak, the darkness might not communicate with the heaven, which was nearer to God.³⁹

And

The whole creation is surrounded by the spirit [*pneuma*] of God and the surrounding spirit [*pneuma*], along with the creation, is enclosed by the hand of God ... so man, who with the whole creation is enclosed by the hand of God, cannot see God.⁴⁰

Whether or not we consider the “spirit [*pneuma*] borne above the water” as a separate being derived from God the Father, for example, the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) or God himself, the divine substance was the *pneuma*, and it was one and the same regardless of how many beings were “begotten” from one and the same God.

Moreover, the pneumatic beings, such as the Logos, angels, demons, and souls, could have physical sensations and interactions with humans, were spatially delineated, could be spatially displaced, and even – in the case of the evil angels, the demons – were to be subjected to eternal physical suffering in eternal fire.⁴¹ The demons were located somewhere in a limited physical space (underground in Hades, Gehenna, or Tartarus; the earth [land] was considered to be flat in the biblical worldview).⁴²

³⁷ Samuel Noah Kramer, *From the Tablets of Sumer* (Indian Hills, CO: Falcon's Wing Press, 1956).

³⁸ “Dwelling space of the spirit [*pneuma*] is above.” Theophilus, *Ad Graecos* XIII.

³⁹ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolytum*, text and translation by Robert M. Grant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), II.13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, I.5.

⁴¹ *II Apol.* VIII, IX.

⁴² Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, translation edited by Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 67.

This understanding of *pneuma* was explicitly indicated by Tertullian in his *Contra Praxean* and in *De Carne Christi*. After a lengthy discussion of the generation of the Logos, which “is a certain substance, constructed by the Spirit [*Pneuma*],” Tertullian proves that its substance must be the same as the *pneuma* of God:

For who will deny that God is a body, although God is a Spirit [*Spiritus*]? For Spirit has a bodily substance of its own kind, in its own form.⁴³

And discussing the nature of Christ’s soul, Tertullian makes a generalized statement:

Since, however, it [the soul] exists, it must needs have a something through which it exists. If it has this something, it must be its body [*corpus eius*]. Everything which exists is a bodily substance *sui generis*. Nothing lacks bodily existence but that which is non-existent.⁴⁴

To summarize: In the Old Testament there is only one *pneuma*, that is, God’s Pneuma (רוח אלהים), the “stuff” of God, and such is the usage of Philo and of Josephus (τὸ πνεῦμα Θεοῦ or πνεῦμα τὸ Θεῖον) (God’s Pneuma, divine Pneuma). Josephus and Philo never speak of the Holy Ghost or Spirit (*Pneuma*). Justin, however, differentiates between God’s Pneuma and the other Pneuma called by him either the Prophetic Pneuma or Holy Pneuma, without explaining its origin. We may, however, deduce its origin from his treatment of the next Pneuma, the Logos, and from the statement of Theophilus. Theophilus clearly identifies the Pneuma mentioned in Genesis 1:2, contrary to the meaning of the text, as a separate Pneuma given out or emanated or radiated from God’s Pneuma. Moreover, the second *pneuma* in Justin, the Logos, is called God’s Son and also Christ and was generated before all creation by some kind of emanation. It was, in the next stage, incarnated in man, Jesus. By a fancy interpretation of Lamentations 4:20, where Jeremiah clearly speaks of the future Jewish and human Messiah as “The breath [*pneuma*] of our nostrils, the anointed [*messiah*] of Yahweh,” Justin misunderstood the meaning of the translated Hebrew in the Septuagint as indicating the existence of the divine Pneuma of Christ.

The Holy Spirit (Pneuma) or the Prophetic Spirit (Pneuma)

In the already quoted passage, Justin states that Christians worship and adore the Triad together with “the host of the other good angels who follow and are made like Him [the Son].” Justin here is in agreement with most people of antiquity who filled the world with a plethora of divine beings.

⁴³ Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani, *Opera* (Turnholt: Typographi Bepols Editores Pontificii, 1954), part II, *Adversus Praxean* VII.8–9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, part II, *De Carne Christi* XI.3–4.

All of these divine beings, according to Justin, derive from one source and are produced by the same mechanism, that is, emanation or effluence of the divine substance, *Pneuma*, from the One God. The third pneumatic individual of the Triad, the Holy Spirit (*Pneuma*), is represented by Justin in a variety of ways.

One of the traditions refers to *prophetic inspiration and utterances*, and therefore Justin most often uses the name of the Prophetic Spirit (*Pneuma*) for its description. This tradition was universal and found in all cultures and religions, including Christianity. It was expressed in a variety of prophecies produced by the prophets in a state of ecstasy (often induced by eating hallucinogenic herbs or fungi), of inspiration, or oracular utterances.⁴⁵ This tradition is attested to by the existence of such words as to be inspired, full of the god, inspired by the god (ἐνθεάζω, ἐνθεόομαι, ἐνθεος), all of which refer to the state of being full of god, to be filled by god (the English equivalent of it is *enthusiasm*). The Holy Spirit assumes a variety of roles and speaks through various characters. Justin often confuses the function of both the Logos and the Prophetic Spirit claiming that all prophecies were inspired by the Logos: “I think that even you will concede that the Prophets are inspired by none other than the divine Word (Logos).”⁴⁶ Thus, the Prophetic Spirit mentioned frequently by Justin is positively identified by him as the Logos or the Son, and the prophetic function ascribed to the Holy Spirit was performed by the divine Logos. Justin further elaborates on the manner in which the Logos acted in prophecies by saying that the utterances recorded by the prophets were “spoken by the divine Logos” (Θειοῦ Λόγου), and which is equal to the Spirit (*Pneuma*) of prophecy, but he spoke sometimes “as from the person [assuming the role or figure] of God, the Lord and Father of all” (ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ δεσπότης πάντων καὶ πατρὸς Θεοῦ), sometimes “as from the person [assuming the role or figure] of Christ” (ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ Χριστοῦ), sometimes “as from the person [assuming the role or figure] of the people answering the Lord or His Father” (ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου λαῶν ἀπὸ κρινομένων τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ). The Spirit (*Pneuma*) of prophecy also spoke through David.⁴⁷ Therefore, Justin sometimes calls the Holy Spirit the Prophetic Spirit, sometimes the Logos, and sometimes God.⁴⁸ In the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin speaks about only two Divine Beings, the Father and the Son, perhaps in an attempt to reconcile the Triadic Christian tradition with the prophetic Hebrew tradition of the Old Testament.

In the Triadic tradition, which must have been popular among unsophisticated Christians of Gentile origin, the Holy Spirit (*Pneuma*) is represented as the

⁴⁵ *Dialogue with Trypho* CXV; *I Apol.* XXXI–LXII.

⁴⁶ *I Apol.* XXXIII.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, VI, XXXVI, XLI.

⁴⁸ *Dialogue with Trypho* XXV; *I Apol.* XXXI, XXXVI–XXXVII; *Dialogue with Trypho* LXXXIV.

Third divine being in the liturgical Christian tradition reported by Justin.⁴⁹ Its generation is understood by a common mechanism for all other divine beings of lesser rank, that is, by an effluence or emanation of God's Pneuma. But Justin could not ascribe to it any metaphysical function distinct from that of the Logos.

In the final analysis, we must conclude that in Justin's time there were already various traditions of the Holy Spirit (Pneuma), and he simply reported them and used the language that seemed to him convenient in a given situation. One hypothesis, promoted by Goodenough,⁵⁰ would have Justin ascribing to the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) primarily the Logos function of inspiring the prophets that was in operation before the incarnation of Christ. After Jesus' baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) upon him, Christ assumed the former activity of the Holy Spirit (Pneuma), and there would be no more prophets.⁵¹ The baptism of Christ remains an embarrassing event for Christians who assume the existence of the separate Logos or the trinitarian doctrine.

According to Justin, there are three (or two) separate divine entities popularly worshiped by the Christians: God the Father, whose substance is God's Pneuma; the second Pneuma is the Logos or the Son of God; and the third Pneuma is the Holy or Prophetic Pneuma. Justin, however, claims that in reality the two Pneumas, the Holy Pneuma and the Logos Pneuma are one and the same Pneuma and, only according to the functions it performs, it assumes different characteristics and identities, and therefore is described by different names. This method is typical for the Greek mentality and analysis, where every phenomenon, every aspect of nature or of human life was ascribed to a special real or hypostatized agent responsible for its occurrence. We have seen a similar approach in Theophilus and Philo without, however, hypostatization of God's attributes.

By extension, these three Pneumas must be the same as God's Pneuma because they originated from it. So they would be three individuals in the unity of God's substance. But this point was not emphasized by Justin; on the contrary, he insisted on the numerical distinction and subordination of these two Pneumas to the First God, the Father. Thus, there is no Trinity in Justin's writings, as he believed in only one supreme God. The Logos and the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) had subordinate ranks, being in the second and third place, respectively, and entirely dependent on the will of God the Father. One may classify his doctrine as triadic in distinction from the later developed trinitarian doctrine. However, the concept of the unity of the substance found its way eventually into the decree of the Council of

⁴⁹ *I Apol.* VI, XIII, LX, LXI, LXV, LXVII.

⁵⁰ Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr: An Investigation into Conceptions of Early Christian Literature and Its Hellenistic and Judaic Influences* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968; reprint of the first edition, Jena, 1928), pp. 186–188.

⁵¹ *Dialogue with Trypho* LXXXVII–LXXXVIII.

Nicaea (325), which declared that the three divine entities have the same substance, God's or the Father's substance (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς), but they are different individuals. Moreover, the Justin formulation of radiation or emanation as "light from light" (φῶς ἐκ φωτός) was used literally in the Nicæan assertion.⁵²

MARCION OF PONTUS AND TWO DIFFERENT GODS

The insistence by Justin on the one God refers to the one God's substance (*pneuma*) and was derived from the Hebrew monotheistic tradition, but it was combined with the popular idea of the three divine entities current in the Greek philosophical speculations – to say nothing that many other divine and supernatural beings such as angels and demons were created from the same substance as God. In order to emphasize the difference between the one God Christians and Jews were worshiping and all the other gods, especially because the coexistent alternative Christian Gnostic doctrines about other types of gods (implying different types of *pneuma*) were spreading,⁵³ the church leaders had to indicate the relative unity of the three figures by the equality of their substance, that is, *pneuma*. Justin was especially familiar with the doctrines propagated by his contemporary, Marcion of Pontus (ca. 85–160), who taught about another kind of God different from the God of the Hebrews and Christians, superior to the Creator of the universe:

And there is a certain Marcion of Pontus who is even now teaching his disciples to believe in some other God greater than the Demiurge; who by the aid of the demons, has caused many of every race of men and women to speak blasphemies and to deny that God is the Maker of the universe, and to profess that another, who is greater than He, has done greater works.⁵⁴

Marcion was not a Christian Gnostic since he was not interested in the cosmological speculations typical for this movement. He was the son of the bishop of Sinope, was supposedly expelled from the church by his own father, and came to Rome circa 138–140. He joined the Roman church and even donated a large sum of money. He became influenced by a certain Cerdo who was propounding a radical dualism differentiating between two gods, the God of the Old Testament and the Father of the New Testament. Marcion developed similar concepts claiming that there are three principles: the irate and visible Creator God of the Jews (the Demiurge) who is the judge; the hitherto

⁵² Joannes Domincus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* (Graz: Akademische Druck-U. Verlagsanstalt, 1960), Concilium Nicæanum Generale, Symbolum Concilii, vol. 2, pp. 666–667.

⁵³ Eric Francis Osborn, *Justin Martyr* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1973), p. 199; Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*.

⁵⁴ *I Apol.* XXVI.

unknown, unnamable and invisible good God of love, who revealed himself in Christ and whose leading exponent was Paul; and the third principle, the devil, who is between the other two. In other doctrinal tenets he preached virginity, fasting on Saturday, and celebration of the sacraments only with water and rejected the resurrection of the flesh claiming that salvation belongs only to the soul. He believed in the transmigration of the souls. Epiphanius (315–403), bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, wrote that the followers of Marcion repudiated the divinity of Christ and claimed that he was “either a son of the evil one, while others disagree, saying that he is a son of the judge and Demiurge.” He was supposed to leave his own father (either the Demiurge or the evil one) and move upward to the good God and become adhered to him. Christ, according to Marcion, came down from the invisible God for the refutation of the God of the Jews, the Law, and the prophets. “But he the Christ, came as sent by him into the world and in opposition to his own father to abolish all that his natural father had legislated whether the latter is the he who spoke in the Law or the God of evil whom they assign to the third principle.”⁵⁵ And, “If Christ had not fled, as Marcion says, to the God above, the good God would have had no one to send, if conflict had not arisen between the father of Christ and his own son, as Marcion says.”⁵⁶

Marcion was the first one who established a canon of scripture including in it ten epistles of Paul and a part of the text of the Gospel of Luke. The beginning and the part related to the incarnation were eliminated from the original text because Marcion claimed that Christ was only a *pneuma* (spirit) and was not incarnated.

After being excommunicated from the Roman church in 144, he stayed in Rome and founded his own church with his own hierarchy, which survived until the Middle Ages. He was the author of two works, *Antitheses* and *New Testament*.⁵⁷ The word “person” is not mentioned in the description of the three individuals of the divine substance, Pneuma. They were three divine entities with different functions or roles ascribed to them. The term “person” was introduced later because the Greek term *prosōpon* used for “person” meant just exactly this, the role or part played by an individual.

The First Council of Constantinople (381) extended the Nicæan formulation to include the Holy Pneuma as proceeding from the Father and ascribed to it the function of “vivifying” in accordance with the ancient physiological

⁵⁵ St. Epiphanius, *The Panarion: Selected Passages*, translated by Philip A. Amidon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), *Marcionites* 42.14.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.16.

⁵⁷ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I.27.2; Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1924); Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: The Gospel of the Alien God*, translated by John E. Steely and Lyle D. Bierma (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1990); E. C. Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (London: SPCK, 1948); U. Bianchi, “Marcion: Théologien ou Docteur Gnostique?” *Vigiliae Christianae* 21 (1967): 141–149.

knowledge.⁵⁸ Finally, the Council of Chalcedon in 451 declared Jesus Christ to be truly God and truly human (Θεὸν ἀληθῶς καὶ ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς) and of one substance (ὁμοούσιον) with the Father touching on the Godhead and of one substance with us according to humankind, begotten before all time of the Father (πρὸ αἰώνων μὲν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα) and in the last days, from Mary the God-bearer; and though he has two separate natures (ἐν δύο φύσεσιν ἀσυγχήτως), they are preserved in one function or role (person) and in one individual (εἰς ἓν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν).⁵⁹

NUMENIUS AND THE GREEK SOURCES OF THE JUSTIN TRIADIC FORMULA

When Justin mentions that Christians believe in the Triad – the Most True God who is the Father, the Second (God), and the Third (God) – he refers directly to the discussion among his contemporary Middle Platonists. We have testimony of this discussion preserved in the fragments of the philosophical writings of Numenius of Apamea in Syria (fl. ca. 150), which were preserved primarily by Eusebius of Caesarea, Origen, Macrobius, Calcidius, and Porphyry.⁶⁰ We know nothing about his life. Johannes Laurentius Lydus (ca. 410–465), a Byzantine philosopher, mentions his name with the sobriquet Roman (Νουμήνιος ὁ Ῥωμαῖος) which would indicate that Numenius stayed in Rome.⁶¹ His name is mentioned by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215),⁶² which provides the *terminus ad quem* as the second half of the second century. Preserved fragments are from: *On the Good* (Περὶ τἀγαθοῦ), a work modeled on the dialogues of Plato; a treatise *On the Infidelity of the Academy to Plato* (Περὶ τῆς Ἀκαδημαϊκῶν πρὸς Πλάτωνα διαστάσεως); *On the Secrets of Plato* (Περὶ τῶν παρὰ Πλάτωνι ἀπορρήτων); and *On the Incorruptibility of the Soul* (Περὶ ἀφθαρσίας Ψυχῆς).

The triadic speculations are nothing new. We find them in Greek philosophy, as well as in Egyptian religion, and in the last one especially emphasized was the identity of the three entities.⁶³ Particularly striking is the agreement of the

⁵⁸ Concilium Constantinopolitanum Generale, Symbolum Concilii, in Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova*, vol. 3, p. 566.

⁵⁹ Concilium Chalcedonense, Confessio Fidei, in Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova*, vol. 6, p. 1125.

⁶⁰ Numenius, *Fragments*, texte établi et traduit par Édouard des Places (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1973); *The Neoplatonic Writings of Numenius*, collected and translated from the Greek by Kenneth Guthrie, with foreword by Michael Wagner (Lawrence, KS: Selene Books, 1987; first published in 1917).

⁶¹ Lydus, *De Mensib.* IV.80, in Numenius, frag. 57 (Des Places).

⁶² Clément d'Alexandrie, *Les Stromates*, introduction de Claude Mondésert, traduction et notes de Marcel Caster (Paris: Édition du Cerf, 1951), Tome I. Introduction et notes de P. Th. Camelot, texte grec et traduction de Cl. Mondésert (Paris: Édition du Cerf, 1954), Tome II. T. I.22.150.4.

⁶³ John Gwyn Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).

Numenius doctrine with that presented in the so-called *Chaldaean Oracles*.⁶⁴ The reason probably is because both the Numenius doctrine and the *Chaldaean Oracles* have the same source, namely, the Platonic tradition via Xenocrates. This was the current theological doctrine of the second century. Numenius, in turn, influenced the Christian Apologist, Justin, the Greek philosophers Plotinus and Porphyry, and later Eusebius of Caesarea.

NUMENIUS

Numenius is most interesting because he developed further such concepts of Greek philosophical tradition (as One, Demiurge, Father, Logos, Mother, World Soul) into a theological system by introducing explicitly a system of hierarchical cosmic entities, two or three Gods, interrelated by *πρόσχησις*, which is a difficult term to translate but signifies a desired, loving dependence and provenance. Such a conception could have an appeal to the philosophically oriented early Christians, who operated within the framework of biblical formulations. Moreover, Numenius was acquainted with the Hebrew and Christian scriptural tradition,⁶⁵ a fact that could have gained for him sympathy from the Christian side. Eusebius praised Numenius for deriving his ideas from Plato and Moses. Numenius himself declared Plato to be just “Moses who speaks the Attic language.”⁶⁶ A complete correlation between the two systems, that of Justin and that of Numenius, is provided in [Table 1](#).

The starting point for Justin, as well as later for Tertullian, is the baptismal formula, which had a magical, eschatological, social, and moral significance defined by its Hebrew and ritualistic original character. Justin and Tertullian operated in the Hellenic environment where its Hebrew context was long forgotten. They added to it a cosmic dimension and transferred it from the religious (mythical) platform to the philosophical level, explaining it in cosmic ontological terms. Justin was influenced by the triadic Middle Platonic solution of Numenius and adopted his cosmic ontological concepts to Christian historical mythology. Tertullian will mix it later with the Egyptian Trinitarian pattern.⁶⁷

The innovation that was introduced by Numenius to the Pythagorean-Platonic religious doctrines was the introduction of a Second transcendental

⁶⁴ Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic, and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, nouvelle édition par Michel Tardieu (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978; first published in 1956); Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*, translated from the Greek by Thomas Taylor (London: Bertram Dubell and Reeves and Turner, 1895; first published in 1821).

⁶⁵ John Granger Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), p. 36.

⁶⁶ Numenius, frag. 8 (Des Places).

⁶⁷ John Gwyn Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*.

TABLE I. Comparison of the Two Systems

Justin Martyr	Numenius
<p>God is the Father, the First God; father of all his substance Pneuma; ungenerated (unbegotten); unchangeable; impassible; ineffable (unutterable); nameless; eternal (always existing); Demiurge, creator or begetter of all things but not directly, through the second God, his Son or Logos; he sows the Logos; Master of all; is the cause of the second God's power and existence; is the principle of life.</p>	<p>The First God, The First Mind; the Father of the Second God; simple, indivisible; Good-in-itself, source of being and an idea; principle of being (οὐσία); idle, does not create directly; impassible (stable); occupied with intelligibles; in the final analysis is the cause of everything; from him comes order in the world, its eternity and salvation; thinks out of desire (πρόσχησις) for the Second God; the First God is related to the Second like the farmer to the planter, for he sows the seeds of all souls; is related to that which is alive, is the principle of life.</p>
<p>The Second in rank: the Logos (Word), the Son, Jesus Christ (second) Pneuma (Spirit); first Power of God; identified with the Logos; the Logos is with (?) God and is his first-generated (begotten) of God as the Son of God; came from the Father before the beginning of the world; Logos generated the universe out of a shapeless substratum; he generated himself as a man, Jesus (as in the Greek manner of Zeus's sons) by taking the shape of man through the power and will of the Father; he depends on the Father; is identified often with the Third entity in rank (the Prophetic);</p>	<p>The Second God or Mind direct agent of creation, Demiurge; agent of animation; occupied with the intelligibles and sensibles; becomes creative out of a desire for the third God; when he is turned toward us, the bodies are animated by his radiations with which they are united; the Second God. The lawgiver, transplants and distributes what was planted from above, i.e., by the First God; Second God is good by participating in the Good of the First; as God Demiurge is to the Good so is becoming to being (substance), that is, as image to an imitation; thus the Second God is an image and imitation of the First God;</p>

Justin Martyr

Teacher;
 every human partakes of the Logos,
 that is, has a part of it;
 the seed of God;
 Son and Logos as a generated being
 has names:
 as Christ – name associated with
 being anointed by God for
 ordering all things
 as Jesus – name associated with being
 Savior and for the destruction of
 demons;
 lawgiver of the new covenant;
 also angel and apostle;
 Justin identified Logos with the
 World Soul of Plato;
 does not accomplish anything without
 the power and will of God the
 Father.

The Third in rank

The Prophetic (Pneuma) Spirit; also
 called the Holy Spirit (Pneuma);
 divine Spirit;
 often identified with the Second in
 rank, with the Logos and God;
 moves prophets;
 speaks as a human person;
 speaks as person of God;
 speaks as person of Christ;
 principle of becoming;
 speaks as person of people;
 if separate from the Second, its
 generation must be by analogy the
 same as that of the second in rank.

Relationship between the Three

The Son, Logos born by emanation
 from the Father without abscission,
 analogy to **fire kindled from the
 fire**, rays of sun to the sun, voice
 uttered from the source.
 The same mechanism must be
 supposed for the Prophetic
 Spirit since in reality it is the same
 being.

Numenius

has a double character
 – when he participates in the First God
 then he is the Second God,
 – when he participates in the world
 (matter) which he creates then he is
 the Third God;
 he produces from himself his own Idea
 and the World;
 he generates the world out of desire for
 the Third;
 he implants, distributes, and transplants
 into each man the seed planted by
 the First God – the noetic part of the
 soul.

The Third God or Mind

The Third God – Creation;
 as world it is produced by the Second
 God;
 as intellect it is related to human
 discursive thinking.

Relationship between the Three

Relationship between the First and the
 Second as **fire kindled from the fire**,
 farmer and planter, as donor and
 receiver, knowledge partaken by the
 receiver from the donor.
 Relationship as between Father-Creator
 and Creation.
 Other metaphor: Father- Son (Offspring)-
 Descendant (Grandson).

TABLE I (cont.)

Justin Martyr	Numenius
	<p>There are four things (πραγμάτα):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the First God, Good in itself; 2. his imitation, good Demiurge; 3. being (substance) (οὐσία), which is shared between the two: that of the First God and that of the Second God; 4. imitation of being (substance), which is beautiful cosmos, beautified by participating in the Beauty of the First God. <p>Everything is in everything; The Good is one because the second God partakes of the First.</p>

and noetic entity between the supreme being and the universe. Numenius, undoubtedly influenced by Plato's statement about the three principles in the universe transmitted by Xenocrates, which we have already discussed, derived the concept of the three Gods from distinguishing "all things in their rank and order." First, after thorough analysis of the Platonic concepts of Being and Becoming, he establishes that what exists is incorporeal (ἄσώματον) and intelligible (νοητόν), and has the name of Substance and Being (τοῦ ἄσωμάτου εἶναι ὄνομα οὐσίαν καὶ ὄν).⁶⁸ Having established that Existing Substance and the Idea are intelligible and that the Mind is their cause, Numenius concludes that the Mind alone is Good.⁶⁹ Now from the life process of the Supreme Divinity (Mind), he derives his statement about the three Gods (or Minds):

The First God, who exists in himself, is simple; for as he absolutely deals with none but himself, he is in no way divisible; however, the Second God and the Third God are One. When however this (unity) is brought together with Matter, which is Doubleness, the (One Divinity) indeed unites it, but is by Matter split, inasmuch as Matter is full of desires, and in a flowing condition. But inasmuch as he is not only in relation with the Intelligible, which would be more suitable to his own nature, he forgets himself, while he gazes on Matter, and cares for it. He comes into touch with the Perceptible, and busies himself with it; he leads it up into his own nature, because he was moved by desire for Matter.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Numenius, frags. 20, 21, 22 (Guthrie); frags. 6, 7, 8 (Des Places).

⁶⁹ Numenius, frag. 25 (Guthrie); frag. 16 (Des Places).

⁷⁰ Numenius, frag. 27 (Guthrie); frag. 11 (Des Places).

Thus the First God is characterized as the First Mind, the Good-in-itself (αὐτοαγαθόν), Self-existence (αὐτὸ ὄν). He exists in himself, is simple and not divisible.⁷¹ He does not create and remains idle (ἀργόν) from all the labors of the creation as would a king.⁷²

The Second God, the Creator (ποιητής, δημιουργός), rules by passing through the heavens. What is his function? On his passage, the mind is shed down to earth on all who are destined to participate. Whenever the divinity looks on any of us, life and animation of bodies are the result, and whenever the divinity turns himself toward himself, all animation is extinguished.⁷³

The Second Divinity remains in a subordinate position to the First One. As the Creative Divinity he is the principle of Becoming (γενέσεως), so must the Good be the principle of existing Substance (οὐσίας). And the Creative Divinity is analogous to the First, so must be Becoming to Being (Substance), because he is his image (εἰκόν) and imitation (μίμημα).⁷⁴ The Second Divinity in this theory is the Demiurge, who has a double character – either he participates in the First God, then he is called the Second God, or he turns himself to the matter and produces the World out of formless matter (since his nature is being Creator), then he is called the Third God and even may be regarded as the World. His essence (or substance) can be analyzed from two perspectives as well. First, the Second God is the principle of Becoming, and inasmuch as he produces from himself his own Idea and the universe, he is the Demiurge and Intelligible. Second, if the substance (or essence) of the First supreme God who is Intelligible is Intellect and he himself is the Good, then the Second God, the Demiurge, inasmuch as he is the Good of Becoming, must be the Good-in-itself co-natural or cognate (σύμφυτον) to the substance of the First God. Both share the same substance, though Numenius does not state this explicitly.

Numenius classifies the Demiurge, the Second God, as analogous to the First God, his image and imitation. In conclusion to this reasoning, Numenius declares that there are four entities (πραγμάτια) with the following names: the First God, who is the Good-in-itself, pure Intellect; the good Demiurge, God Creator, his imitator; the one Substance (Essence), which is shared by the two – the First God, and the Second God; the copy of this Substance (Essence), the beautiful (i.e., ordered) World, which is beautified (i.e., ordered from disorder) by its participation in the Beauty.⁷⁵

The Second God and the Third God are one whenever he is united with Matter (*dyad*). Because the Second God remains in relation not only with the Intelligible (appropriate for his nature) but also with the Perceptible, so,

⁷¹ Numenius, frags. 26, 31 (Guthrie); frag. 11 (Des Places); frag. 25 (Guthrie); frag. 16 (Des Places); frag. 31 (Guthrie); frag. 17 (Des Places).

⁷² Numenius, frag. 12 (Des Places); frag. 27a (Guthrie).

⁷³ Numenius, frag. 27a (Guthrie); frag. 12 (Des Places).

⁷⁴ Numenius, frag. 25 (Guthrie); frag. 16 (Des Places).

⁷⁵ Numenius, frag. 16 (Des Places); frag. 25 (Guthrie).

whenever he gazes on Matter, he forgets himself and comes into touch with the Perceptible moved by desire for Matter.⁷⁶

In this philosophy, since the First transcendental God was unknown to man, did not create, was impassible, and contented himself with contemplation, the Second God was needed as an agent of creation and animation. Moreover, if it was not necessary for the First God to create, then he could be considered the Father of the Second God, the Demiurge. And it was for reason of piety that Numenius denied the direct creative function to the First God. The Demiurge rules in heaven and busies himself with both the Intelligible and the Sensible; through him happens all that happens.⁷⁷ Just as the pilot who sails at sea and looks to the sky to find his way, so does the Creator, who is linked to matter by many connections, regulate its harmony through Ideas. By looking up to God on high, he receives his critical judgment, but his impulsive motion he receives from the desire for Matter.⁷⁸

And we humans exist in our terrestrial life when the Intellect (animation) is sent down to us. When God looks at us and turns to each one, our bodies become alive by uniting us with his radiation (divine *nous*). When God turns away, all that animation is extinguished while the Intellect continues its blissful life.⁷⁹

The participatory relation between the First God and the Second God Numenius illustrates by using several analogies: that of a farmer and planter, that of donor and receiver, of a fire kindled from another fire, of knowledge partaken by the receiver from the donor.⁸⁰ This participation of the Second God in the First becomes still more pronounced as he receives his goodness from the First by a process of thought so that the Good is One (τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὅτι ἕστιν ἓν). He really becomes one with the First God. This relation to the First God remains in complete accord with the Platonic paradigm of Ideas: just as humans and everything else are modeled on Ideas, so the Good that is the Idea of Good is the Idea of the Demiurge.⁸¹ In another fragment Numenius is reported to teach a Triad formulated using another metaphor, namely that there are three Gods – the First, whom he calls Father (πατέρα); the Second, whom he calls Creator (ποιητήν); and the Third – Creation (ποίημα). Thus, the Creator would be two Gods – as the First and the Second. And using poetic language, they could be described using terms of filial descentance as the Fore-Father (πάππον), Offspring or Son (ἔγγονον), and Descendant or Grandson (ἀπόγονον).⁸²

⁷⁶ Numenius, frag. 26 (Guthrie); frag. 11 (Des Places).

⁷⁷ Numenius, frag. 12 (Des Places); frag. 27a, b (Guthrie).

⁷⁸ Numenius, frags. 13, 18 (Des Places); frags. 28, 32 (Guthrie).

⁷⁹ Numenius, frag. 12 (Des Places); frag. 27a, b (Guthrie).

⁸⁰ Numenius, frags. 13, 14 (Des Places); frags. 28, 29 (Guthrie).

⁸¹ Numenius, frags. 19, 20 (Des Places); frags. 33, 34 (Guthrie).

⁸² Numenius, frag. 21 (Des Places); frag. 36 (Guthrie).

In the final analysis, the First God is the cause of everything and has absolute control. For though he is impassible, he has an innate motion from which derives the order (i.e., beauty) in the world and the salvation of all.⁸³ And he uses the Second God who is his different function to organize the Matter, thus creating the world:

Numenius relates the First (Mind) to that which is really alive [κατὰ τὸ ὄν ζῶον]; and he says, that it thinks, out of desire [ἐν προσχρήσει] for the Second (God). The Second Mind he relates to the Intellect that becomes creative out of desire for the Third; and the Third he relates to discursive Thinking [κατὰ τὸν διανοούμενον], that is, human.⁸⁴

⁸³ Numenius, frags. 13, 14, 15 (Des Places); frags. 28, 29, 30 (Guthrie).

⁸⁴ Numenius, frag. 39 (Guthrie); frag. 22 (Des Places).

Tertullian, Originator of the Trinity

TERTULLIAN'S LEGEND

At the end of the second century there were three main centers of church organization – in Antioch, in Alexandria, and in Rome. The language used in the church writings was Greek. But the situation was soon to be changed; because of the writings of Tertullian, Carthage, his city, and Latin, his language, were to gain prominence and give rise to a Latin Christianity.¹ Though Tertullian (ca. 170–ca. 230) is the most important Christian writer in the development of Christian doctrine,² he was not mentioned during the third century. He inspired, however, other writers in Africa: Minucius Felix (fl. second half of the second century), Cyprian (200–258), Arnobius of Sicca (fl. ca. 300), Lactantius (ca. 240–ca. 320), and the first Italian theologian who wrote in Latin, Novatian (210–280), whose *De Trinitate*³ is just a repetition of Tertullian's treatise. Novatian's treatise was written in 257 and probably in reaction to the doctrine of Sabellius (fl. ca. 215), which he began to propound shortly before. Even today, Tertullian's importance is not fully recognized. Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), a preeminent German theologian, writes:

When the Nicene formulary is praised, it is always of Athanasius that we think; when the Chalcedonian decree is cited, it is the name of Leo the Great that is magnified. But that Tertullian is in reality the father of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and of the Person of Christ, and that in the whole patristic literature there is no treatise that can be compared in importance and influence with the

¹ W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 285–293, 398–403.

² James Franklin Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine to the Time of the Council of Chalcedon* (London: Methuen, 1933); Eric Osborn, *Tertullian the First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chap. I.

³ Novatian, *Treatise Concerning the Trinity*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, revised by Alexander Coxe (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), vol. VI, pp. 611–634.

tract “*Against Praxeas*” it has necessarily been left to the investigation of our own day to exhibit.⁴

We do not know much about Tertullian, and what we know is primarily from his own writings.⁵ We know that Septimius Tertullianus⁶ lived during the reigns of Emperor Septimius Severus (r. 193–211) and his son Caracalla (r. 211–217) in Carthage, and was probably born circa 170. He was brought up in a Hellenic family, and we have no account of when he became a Christian. His last work can be dated with certainty to the year 212, so it can be deduced that he died shortly afterward, probably circa 230. In the Middle Ages his name, without any justification, was augmented to Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus. Tertullian spent most, if not all, of his life in Carthage where Apuleius of Madauros (ca. 124–ca. 170) also wrote.⁷ Apuleius was famous and older, an important figure in Carthage as the provincial priest of Isis and Osiris, a barrister, poet, and historian. Because he was also a Platonic philosopher and a critic of the Christian movement, he was disliked by Augustine.⁸

Through the centuries, scholars and religious writers repeated the erroneous legend about Tertullian created by Eusebius of Caesarea (263–339) and Jerome (345–420). This legend was discredited by exhaustive studies conducted by Timothy David Barnes.⁹ It will be useful to summarize briefly his arguments.

Eusebius reported in his *History of the Church*, written sometime between 309 and 326, that Tertullian was “an expert on Roman law and famous on other grounds – in fact one of the most brilliant men in Rome.”¹⁰ There is no evidence

⁴ Quoted by Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970), p. 5.

⁵ Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani, *Opera Pars I. Opera Catholica. Pars II. Opera Montanistica*, in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontifici, 1954); English version in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vols. III, IV, *Ad Nationes* XIV.1–2; *De Patientia* I.1; *De Pudicitia* I; XXI.10.

⁶ *De Virginibus velandis* XVII.5. Tertullian gives his name at the end of the tractate as Septimius Tertullianus.

⁷ Apuleius of Madauros, *The Isis-Book (Metamorphoses, Book XI)*, edited with an introduction, translation, and commentary by J. Gwynn Griffiths (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975).

⁸ *The Transformations of Lucius Otherwise Known as the Golden Ass*, a new translation by Robert Graves from Apuleius (New York: Noonday Press, 1951; 1998); *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi Opera Omnia*, in J.-P. Migne, ed., *Cursus Patrologiae*, Series Latina (PL) (Paris, 1861–62), vols. 32–47; *De Civitate Dei* 4:2; 8:12; 15–22; 9:3, English version in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), vols. 1–8; Augustine, *Writings of St. Augustine: Letters*, vols. I–IV, in *The Fathers of the Church*, translated by Sister Wilfrid Parsons (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1951, 1953), Ep. CXXXVIII.19.

⁹ Timothy David Barnes, *Tertullian: Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

¹⁰ Eusebius of Caesarea, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (hereafter *H.E.*), translated with an introduction by G. A. Williamson (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984). Also in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1.II.2.

whatsoever that he has ever been in Rome, though it is likely that he visited this city.¹¹ Eusebius knew only Tertullian's *Apologeticum*, and since Tertullian often cites Roman law, for example, one statute that in Rome no one could be regarded as a god unless he had been approved by the Senate, Eusebius probably drew his conclusion. Tertullian may have been educated in Rome, but he spent the greater part of his life in Carthage, where he was, as Cassiodorus (487–580), a Christian senator correctly points out, a teacher of rhetoric, a Christian sophist, and a member of the same literary circles as Apuleius. Tertullian's enormous erudition and his thorough classical education, in which rhetoric was the queen of subjects, point unmistakably to this conclusion.¹²

Eusebius made a total of five references to Tertullian's treatise.¹³ He had an extremely limited knowledge or none at all of the Latin writers. Legend also has it that Tertullian composed two legal textbooks, *De castrensi peculio*, and six volumes of *Quaestiones*,¹⁴ which are cited in the *Digest* and *Institutions* of Justinian¹⁵ as authored by a certain "jurist" Tertullianus. The surviving fragments give little information on their scope.¹⁶ The law relative to *castrense peculium* originated with Augustus and dealt with the acquisitions during service that a soldier could claim as his own. No conclusion can be made as to the date of these laws. The other book, *Quaestiones*, deals with a series of problems unrelated to the previous legal issues. For the chronology it is important to note that one of the opinions of the jurist Tertullian is cited by Ulpian, who, under the rule of Caracalla, wrote a verbal opinion from Sextus Pomponius. So it was deduced that the jurist Tertullian was the pupil of Pomponius and thus born circa 150. But nobody ever established any connection between the jurist and the Christian writer. They may have been contemporaries, and Eusebius might have thought that they were one person. Knowledge of law was not an exclusive prerogative of jurisconsultants but was rather a general need for any public speaking, and ancient education in oratory required knowledge of law. All Latin writers were knowledgeable of the law and made use of it. There were thus probably two contemporaries – the jurist Tertullianus, who may have been a disciple of Pomponius and was born circa 150, and the Christian writer, who was a Christian sophist and rhetorician in Carthage, born circa 170. The

¹¹ Barnes, *Tertullian*, p. 5, appendix 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 211–232; Robert D. Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 1.

¹³ Eusebius, *H.E.* 2.2.4; 2.25.4; 3.20.7; 3.33.3; 5.5.5.

¹⁴ *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, editio stereotypa sexta, volumen secundum, *Codex Iustinianus*, recognovit Paulus Krueger (Berolini: Apud Weidmannos, 1895); *The Digest of Justinian*, Latin text edited by Theodor Mommsen with the aid of Paul Krueger, English translation edited by Alan Watson, vols. 1–4 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. LVII (7. The Confirmation of the Digest).

¹⁵ Justinian, *Institutes*, translated with an introduction by Peter Birks and Grant McLeod with Latin text of Paul Krueger (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

¹⁶ *Corpus Iuris Civilis* II, 342.

treatise *Ad uxorem* suggests that Tertullian was already a Christian when he married a Christian wife.¹⁷ Eusebius probably heard of the jurist and confused him with the Christian writer. Moreover, many scholars emphasize that Tertullian's legal terminology influenced his theological statements and cite this as evidence of his being a jurist. However, Lactantius makes no comment on Tertullian's legal knowledge.¹⁸ If he were a jurist, he would know that there was no *lex, senatus consultum*, or imperial decree prescribing Christianity as illegal, yet he acknowledges that Christians were treated differently and even speaks of a law against them.¹⁹

Eusebius wrote his history in a triumphant period for Christianity, when it gained the upper hand as a result of support from Emperor Constantine, and he followed the general tendency among the early Christian writers to exalt Christians as known figures and of high social standing. The facts contradict this assumption – jurists were impervious to Christianity, and the Roman Senate was largely “pagan” even in the fourth century.²⁰

Eusebius knew only Tertullian's *Apologeticum*, which was probably poorly translated into Greek. Eusebius also claimed that Tertullian was supposed to have addressed his *Apologeticum* to the Senate in Rome,²¹ but Eusebius deduced this erroneous conclusion from the introduction to the *Apologeticum* where Tertullian addresses the magistrates governing Carthage as “Rulers of the Roman Empire, if, seated for the administration of justice in your lofty tribunal, under the gaze of every eye, and occupying there all but the highest position in that state ...”²²

Among other Christian writers, Lactantius does not recognize Tertullian as a jurist or a priest.²³ The presumed legal knowledge of Tertullian leaves much to be desired. Tertullian often used legal terminology and legal language to formulate theological concepts, but he was often mistaken. As noted already, for example, there was no *lex, senatus consultum*, or imperial decree proscribing Christianity as illegal.²⁴ Yet Tertullian never makes a point of it. Although both Christians and criminals were tried by the same legal process, the punishment of common criminals was originally laid down by law, whereas that of Christians was not. Though it would be a good legal point, Tertullian does not make an argument of

¹⁷ *Ad uxorem* I.1.1; II.1.1.

¹⁸ Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* V.4; I.21, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7.

¹⁹ *Apologeticum* IV.3.

²⁰ H. Block, “The Pagan Revival in the West at the End of the Fourth Century,” chap. VIII, in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, edited by A. Momigliano (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 193–218.

²¹ Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.5.

²² *Apologeticum* I.1.

²³ Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* V.4; I.21, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7.

²⁴ Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography* (London: Longmans, 1907); J. E. A. Crake, “Early Christians and Roman Law,” *Phoenix* 19, no. 1 (1965): 61.

it but contends that Christians are not in the same category as other criminals because they are treated differently by the magistrate.²⁵ In a passage in *Apology*, he even speaks of laws against Christians.²⁶ He does not know about the various punishments meted out to Christians that were the subject of a chapter in the seventh book of Ulpian's *De Officio Proconsularis*.²⁷ He is basically ignorant of Roman law, and his knowledge derives only from his personal experience and literature. Tertullian probably adopted in his *Apology* the texts written by previous Apologists²⁸ and added facts from Tacitus or Pliny.

The next writer who left an account of Tertullian's life is Jerome (345–420) in his *De Viris Illustribus*, written circa 392–393:

Tertullian the presbyter, now regarded as chief of the Latin writers after Victor and Apollonius, was from the city of Carthage in the province of Africa, and was the son of a *centurion proconsularis*. He possessed a sharp and vigorous talent, and flourished in the reign of the emperor Severus and Antoninus Caracalla.... He was presbyter of the church until middle life.²⁹

According to Jerome, the first Christian to be distinguished in the Latin letters was Seneca.³⁰ Jerome included him there because of Seneca's spurious correspondence with Paul, which was reportedly widely read.³¹ The next two writers in Latin in Jerome's catalog, in fact, wrote in Greek: Victor, bishop of Rome (r. ca. 189–ca. 195),³² and Apollonius, who, according to Jerome, was to have been a senator in Rome during the reign of Commodus (r. 180–193).³³ Apollonius, betrayed by a slave, obtained leave to prepare a defense, which he read in the Senate, but was condemned and beheaded.³⁴ Jerome copied the words of Eusebius, but he inferred from Eusebius's text that Apollonius

²⁵ *Apologeticum* II.1.

²⁶ *Apologeticum* IV.3, "It is not lawful for you [i.e., Christians] to exist."

²⁷ Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* V.9; V.11.

²⁸ Quadratus (who presented his *Apology* to the Emperor Hadrian, 117–138 C.E., probably during the emperor's stay in Athens in 126) is known only from Eusebius, *H.E.* 4.3.1–3 and Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 19. The text of Aristides, philosopher of Athens (fl. also during the reign of Hadrian), *H.E.* 4.3.3, is preserved in three versions: Greek, Syrian, and partly in Armenian; Greek text in Migne, PG 96.859–1240; English in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 10, edited by Allan Menzies (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000, reprint of T&T Clark edition, Edinburgh, 1872), pp. 263–283. Melito, bishop of Sardis (fl. during the reign of Marcus Aurelius 161–180 C.E.), *H.E.* 4.26.1; Miltiades, from the same period, *H.E.* 4.17.5. The texts of the *Apologies* written by Melito and Miltiades are not preserved; we know about them only from Eusebius, and we have a fragment of Melito quoted by Eusebius, *H.E.* 4.26.1.

²⁹ Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 53, as quoted by Barnes, *Tertullian*.

³⁰ Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 12.

³¹ Claude W. Barlow, ed., *Epistolae Senecae ad Paulum et Pauli ad Senecam "quae vocantur"* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1938).

³² Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 34; Eusebius, *H.E.* 5. 23.3; 24.1; 3. 31.2.

³³ Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 48.

³⁴ Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.21.2.

was a senator, because he was tried by the Senate. But Eusebius implies that Apollonius was not a senator but rather was famous for his learning and philosophy.

Jerome's is the only testimony that Tertullian was a priest. This legend was probably based on Jerome's misreading of Tertullian's treatises, which are cast in the form of sermons. But Tertullian never asserted that he was a priest; on the contrary, he twice classifies himself as a layman.³⁵ We know that he was a Christian circa 185 as he classified himself as a layperson and married, as indicated in his *Ad uxorem*.³⁶ But Tertullian had a detailed knowledge of the proceedings of the church against Marcion and Valentinus.³⁷ In view of Tertullian's importance to the development of Christian dogma, we can understand why it is so difficult psychologically to admit that Tertullian was not a priest.

As to Tertullian's father's title, *centurio proconsularis*, Barnes proves that it had never been attested in any rank in the Roman military. No centurion was a *centurio proconsularis*, nor did any *centurio* anywhere ever bear the title *proconsularis*. The legend was probably created by Jerome's misreading of a passage in Tertullian's *Apology* (9.2) where the expression *patriae nostrae* Jerome misread as *patris nostri*. There is no valid evidence that Tertullian's father was a soldier.³⁸

Tertullian himself implied that he was in Carthage during the reign of Septimius Severus (r. 193–211) and Caracalla (r. 211–217) and that he lapsed into Montanism in middle age. But Jerome is silent on the existence of the supposed contemporary sect of Tertullianistae. The sect, which appeared in the fourth century, had no connection with Tertullian. It was of Carthaginian origin, gained rapid adhesions in Rome, and was patronized by the usurper Magnus Maximus. The sect soon vanished when its surviving members in Carthage rejoined the Catholics and surrendered their basilica to Bishop Aurelius after a spectacular conversion in 388.³⁹

There is no evidence in history of Tertullianistae before 388, and there is no connection between the Tertullianistae and Tertullian except the name. Tertullian passed his life in constant rebellion against his father, the church, and finally the Montanists and awaited the promised *parousia* in virtual isolation.⁴⁰ Augustine and Praedestinatus claimed to know that Tertullian founded the

³⁵ *De Exhortatione castitatis* 7.3 and *De Monogamia* XII.2.

³⁶ *Ad uxorem* I.1.1.

³⁷ *Adversus Marcionem* IV; *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* I–IV, XXX; *Adversus Valentinianos* I–XXXIX.

³⁸ Barnes, *Tertullian*, p. 13, 15.

³⁹ Augustine, *De Haeresibus*, in Migne, PL 42.86; and the anonymous "Praedestinatus" who copies him, in Migne, PL 53.616.

⁴⁰ W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 366.

sect after quarreling with the Montanists.⁴¹ It is most probable that Augustine associated the Montanist party in Africa with the name of Tertullian. Both Augustine and Praedestinatus simply inferred from the name of the sect a connection with Tertullian. It is also possible that the Tertullianistae were simply the Montanist party in Africa.

TERTULLIAN AND MONTANISM

An account of the origin of Montanism given by an anonymous writer, a contemporary of Montanus, was preserved by Eusebius.⁴² Montanus, presumably a converted priest of Cybele, began his prophecies in the Phrygian region of Mysia in Asia Minor, somewhere around the years 150–160.⁴³ The anonymous writer, associated somehow with the Bishop Apollinarius of Hierapolis,⁴⁴ said that a recent convert to Christianity, Montanus, in a village called Ardabau in Phrygia, “was filled with spiritual excitement and suddenly fell into a kind of trance and unnatural ecstasy.” These prophecies appeared rather on the background of natural disasters occurring at that time such as the plague and earthquakes. Christians, however, expected the second coming and the New Jerusalem in a millenarian movement.⁴⁵

Although the movement’s name derived from Montanus, the name of its first prophet and leader, the adherents of the movement called it “Prophecy.” The opponents labeled it “New Prophecy.” The movement spread rapidly from Mysia to Antioch of Syria, Thrace, Gaul, Carthage, Alexandria, and Rome.

The evaluation of Montanists, the so-called Cathaphryges, and the “Phrygian heresy” varies among the exegetes. All exegetes agree, however, that they were orthodox in all matters of Christian doctrine. Only in the fourth century were they accused of an error on theological grounds based on the anachronistic interpretation of Montanus’s utterances.⁴⁶

According to Eusebius, the devil possessed Montanus and incited him to pronounce ecstatic prophecies. Also his two women followers, Priscilla

⁴¹ Augustine, *De Haeresibus ad quod vult deum liber unus*, in Migne, PL XLII.1.86, pp. 46–47; *Praedestinatus, sive Praedestinatorum haeresis, libri tres*, in Migne, PL LIII, LXXXVI, pp. 616–617. He states that Tertullian was a *presbyter carthaginianus* and that he *nihil tamen in fide mutavit*.

⁴² Eusebius, *H. E.* 5.3.

⁴³ W. H. C. Frend, “Montanism: Research and Problems,” in *Archaeology and History in the Study of Early Christianity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1988), pp. 521–537; St. Epiphanius, *The Panarion: Selected Passages*, translated by Philip R. Amidon (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), XLIX; Anti Marjanen, “Montanism: Egalitarian Ecstatic ‘New Prophecy,’” in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heretics”* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005), p. 192.

⁴⁴ Eusebius, *H. E.* 5.16–19.

⁴⁵ Rev. 21:1; *De Fuga in Persecutione IV*; *De Anima* LV.5.

⁴⁶ Pierre de Labriolle, *Les sources pour l’histoire du Montanisme* (Paris: Société d’Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1913).

(or Prisca) and Maximilla, were pronouncing prophecies. After some deliberation, the mainstream churches in Asia declared these prophecies not to be of divine origin.⁴⁷ Montanists were now accused of all kinds of transgressions. The anonymous writer claimed that they were no better than the Gnostics and accused them of deliberately avoiding martyrdom. He stated that not a single Montanist has ever suffered for the faith.⁴⁸ These charges were false, but they were repeated by Apollonius and believed by Eusebius.

According to Eusebius, Christians looked approvingly at the Montanists. As Eusebius relates, even Christians in Gaul sent Irenaeus, who was at that time presbyter in the church of Lyon, with a letter to the bishop of Rome, Eleutherus (r. 174–189), asking him to take a positive stand toward them.⁴⁹ His successor, Victor (r. ca. 189–199), recognized the prophecies of Prisca and Maximilla as genuine utterances of the Holy Spirit⁵⁰ and at first recommended acceptance of their congregations in Asia Minor and in Phrygia into the fellowship of the forming Catholic Church. The church in Rome accepted the Montanists in 203,⁵¹ but eventually the bishop of Rome changed his mind under the influence of Praxeas, favors were reversed, and suppression began.⁵²

Tertullian became a follower of Montanus and adopted his mystical and ascetic principles. Later, Augustine even created the legend that Tertullian founded the aforementioned Tertullianistae as his own sect. Tertullian became recognized as a “heretic” and Montanist only beginning in the fourth century⁵³ because he became inconvenient to the growing domination, accumulation of wealth, and tyranny of the totalitarian church. His criticism confirms what the Hellenic writers were also saying about the Christian Church.⁵⁴ Though he was classified as a “heretic,” his influence could not be avoided. Cyprian, for example, never mentions Tertullian, though he studied him diligently.

Jerome deduced that Tertullian remained orthodox in his beliefs and loyal to the established ecclesiastical hierarchy until middle age, when he became a Montanist and began to criticize the church.⁵⁵ Jerome could not have any indication as to the age of Tertullian, but there is a certain progression in Tertullian’s theological development that is also seen in his writings.⁵⁶

⁴⁷ Eusebius, *H. E.* 5.16.3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.16.11–12.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.3.4, 5.4.1–2.

⁵⁰ *Adversus Praxean* I.4; Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Sermo*, in Migne, PG 59.747; Hermius Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in Migne, PG 67, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd series, vol. 2, VII.18.12.

⁵¹ *Passion of Perpetua*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. III, pp. 697–706.

⁵² *Adversus Praxean* I.4–5; Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adversus Omnes Haereses* VII.4.

⁵³ Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 53.

⁵⁴ Marian Hillar, *The Case of Michael Servetus (1511–1553) – The Turning Point in the Struggle for Freedom of Conscience* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), pp. 55–57.

⁵⁵ Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 53.

⁵⁶ *De Pudicitia* I.10.

Tertullian's reaction was the result of his critical view of the evolving church and its doctrines. The accusation of being a Montanist was an easy excuse to ostracize Tertullian because he did not deviate in any dogmatic sense; on the contrary, he developed the fundamental dogma for the evolving post-Nicaean Christianity.

According to Jerome, Tertullian lapsed into Montanism as a result of envy and insults from the Roman clergy. It seems, however, that Jerome projected on Tertullian his own problems with the church.⁵⁷ Tertullian never broke with the church; rather, he expressed criticism of the church's deviation from the Christian moral and doctrinal principles, and the presumed change in his doctrine reflected the evolution of his own feelings and views.

Tertullian recognized this prophecy⁵⁸ as being in accordance with the promise of the scripture,⁵⁹ and he claimed that Catholics – those representing the dominant Christian beliefs – were wrong in denying the New Prophecy and refusing to accept the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ Montanists became officially condemned in Rome by the bishop of Rome, Zephyrinus (r. 199–217), and in Antioch in Asia Minor under the bishop of Antioch, Serapion (r. 190–211), and their movement became designated as a heresy.⁶¹ The New Prophecy encouraged readiness to embrace martyrdom and discouraged flight in persecution. It is debatable, however, whether Montanists actively sought martyrdom. Montanists survived until the sixth century when they were finally systematically persecuted by Bishop John of Ephesus (507–589), who ordered burning of their churches and writings.⁶²

Irenaeus in his own writings seems to support the Montanists against those who rejected the Gospel of John. Other church fathers such as Hippolytus and Epiphanius confirmed their orthodoxy concerning the view of God, Christ, and resurrection. It is probable, however, that there were around the year 200 two branches of Montanists, one in Rome and the second in Asia Minor. The second branch held the modalistic view of God according to the doctrine of Noetus and Sabellius that God himself was born, suffered, and died just as the Son.⁶³

The reason for the appearance of prophecies is related to the rural character of the region where there were many Jewish settlers, a Jewish rural diaspora,

⁵⁷ C. Mohrmann, *Études sur le latin des Chrétiens* III (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1961–65), p. 38; Pierre de Labriolle, *La crise montaniste* (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1913), p. 354.

⁵⁸ *De Jejunio* I.1.

⁵⁹ Christians expected the Paraclete in the Gospel of John 14:16; 16:13 and ff.

⁶⁰ *De Jejunio* I.3.

⁶¹ Nothing more is known about this bishop. Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.3.4, 5.4.1–2, 5.19.1–4; Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁶² Labriolle, *La crise montaniste*, p. 238.

⁶³ Marjanen, "Montanism: Egalitarian Ecstatic 'New Prophecy,'" p. 194.

descendants of the colonists brought there by Antiochus III circa 200 B.C.E. Christianity here, originating from the Jewish synagogue, could thus preserve the original prophetic and apocalyptic character not spoiled by the Greek intellectual doctrines. The prophecies of Montanus would thus represent the revival of the synoptic gospel doctrine of the coming Kingdom,⁶⁴ and Montanism is regarded as a reaction to the growing organization and power of episcopal government.⁶⁵ Montanists considered the mainstream Christians to be “prophet slayers.”⁶⁶

Some later Montanists fervently expected the imminent coming of the end and the New Jerusalem. Scholars linked this expectation with the chiliastic emphases. It seems that Montanists waited to see the beginning of the millenarian kingdom in the form of a Heavenly Jerusalem descending on Pepuza, a town in Phrygia.⁶⁷ But this Montanist eschatology is reconstructed after Tertullian. Montanists knew, however, about chiliastic speculations because they employed the *Apocalypse of John* and probably the *Fourth Book of Ezra*.⁶⁸ Linkage to Pepuza was done because this town was known to later anti-Montanist writers as the birthplace of the earliest Montanist prophets.

The New Prophecy was based on the scriptural statement “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate [Paraclete], to be with you forever” (Jn. 14:16–17) and is as believable as any other prophecy accepted by the church. The church, however, detected in it a threat to its exclusive economic and ideological monopoly and power.⁶⁹ The other problem the anonymous writer had with the Montanists was that he could not agree that they had as many martyrs as the orthodox Catholics. In any case, he cannot recognize the claim to martyrdom as proof of possessing the true faith: “Some of the other heretical sects have an immense number of martyrs; but this is surely no reason why we should approve of them or acknowledge that they have the truth.”⁷⁰ Other writers who are quoted by Eusebius as opponents of the Montanists are Miltiades,⁷¹ one of the first Apologists and author of several lost treatises (*The Greeks Answered, The Jews Answered, Defense before the Rulers of This World*) and Apollonius,⁷² a Christian writer who refuted “the fraudulent character of their ‘prophecies.’” As reported by Eusebius, Apollonius in his treatise written

⁶⁴ W. H. C. Frend, “Town and Country in Early Christianity,” in *Town and Country in the Early Christian Centuries* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980), chap. I.

⁶⁵ W. H. C. Frend, “The Winning of the Countryside,” in *ibid.*, chap. II.

⁶⁶ Matt. 23:14; Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5.16.12.

⁶⁷ Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture, and the Faith We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 150.

⁶⁸ Trevett, *Montanism*, p. 98.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 62–66.

⁷⁰ Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.16.21–22.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 5.17.1.

⁷² Apollonius was tried by the Senate in Rome during the reign of Commodus and decapitated. *Ibid.*, 5.18.4; 21:2.

thirty-nine years after Montanus began his mission, accused the Montanists of the dissolution of marriage, laying down the laws of fasting, renaming Pepuza as Jerusalem in order that they could be saved at the imminent second coming,⁷³ and appointing special agents to collect money and gifts as “offerings.”⁷⁴

Although the original sources of the Montanist writings did not survive, some of their contents are attested in traces left in the extant anti-Montanist writings. It seems that in the early stage of their development they disallowed marriage. Priscilla and Maximilla divorced their husbands after prophecies.⁷⁵ The Montanists valued celibacy and did not accept a second marriage after divorce or the death of one’s spouse. Such strict ascetic rigors were common among Christians.

Montanism was one of the few second-century Christian movements in which women occupied a prominent and visible role.⁷⁶ The prophetic proclamations of both Priscilla and Maximilla often led to attempts to exorcise the spirit the exorcists believed to be effective in these women.⁷⁷ Montanism was an egalitarian movement, which is confirmed by preserved inscriptions and by Epiphanius, who stated that among Montanist groups women were ordained as clergy and women acted as presbyters and bishop, and that this was based on the New Testament text.⁷⁸ Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (d. 269), in his letter to Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (martyred in 258), reported that Montanist women baptized and administered eucharist.⁷⁹ This free access to positions of leadership for women in the Montanist movement derives from the emphasis on prophecy. For prophecy was a legitimate function for women according to traditional Jewish and Christian understanding.

The other aspect of differences between the Montanists and the mainstream Christian movement was the manner in which churches operated. Apollonius states that Montanists paid salaries to those who proclaimed the word in the churches. The money was collected at offerings by specially appointed tax gatherers.⁸⁰ Apollonius is indignant about this practice. In the mainstream Christian churches, the leader was often the one in whose house the Christian group gathered and who was responsible for the financial aspect and spiritual activities; as a result, the leader was often a wealthy patron. Montanists reversed

⁷³ It was recently discovered that Tymon was a town located near the modern village of Susuzören and Pepuza near the modern village of Karayakuplu in Turkey. Marjanen, “Montanism: Egalitarian Ecstatic ‘New Prophecy,’” p. 191.

⁷⁴ Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.18.1–14.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.18.2–3.

⁷⁶ Trevett, *Montanism*, pp. 151–197.

⁷⁷ Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.16.16, 5.18.13, 5.19.3.

⁷⁸ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 49.2.2, 49.2.5; William Tabbernee, *Montanist Inscriptions and Testimonia: Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997); Gal. 3:28.

⁷⁹ *Ep.* 75.10.

⁸⁰ Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.18.2, 5.18.7.

this tradition, as their leaders came from the poor countryside. Montanist churches became independent of the control exerted by the mainstream leaders and could become a challenge to large city churches led by the wealthy individuals. Because they challenged the power of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Montanists may have been marked for persecution and eventual extermination.

Tertullian was disappointed with the church and could not accept its teaching that the Holy Spirit would not communicate with one who believed in the Gospels. He tried to persuade the Catholics that only belief in the New Prophecy could give one courage to face martyrdom, and only a Montanist could be a true Christian.⁸¹ Tertullian in his impatience despaired of convincing others and used violent invectives. According to him, the recognition of the Paraclete separated the true believers from the disbelievers – the so-called *psychici*, men of the soul, from the materialists, or men of the flesh.⁸² He resolved now to be critical, taking as a motto the words of Speratus, the Scillitan: “In a cause so just there is no deliberation.” The function of the Holy Spirit in individual believers and the autonomy of their relations with God became a similar issue during the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

Tertullian never left the church.⁸³ On the contrary he was one of the first Christian writers who opposed a growing tendency in the church in the second century, namely, the establishment of a rigid and dogmatic hierarchical structure in which the bishops became the central figures in imposing the doctrines and the style of operation and had absolute power in controlling the thought and behavior of the members of the church. Individual enthusiasm and communion with God became inconvenient for the bishops and a threat to their domination. Tertullian was the first who noticed this distortion of religiosity and dared to protest when he emphasized that the church is not a consortium of bishops but a manifestation of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁴ Tertullian, for example, vehemently opposed the church’s usurpation of power to remit and forgive sins as unscriptural.⁸⁵ Tertullian’s criticism coincided with that of the Hellenes.

Irenaeus indicated that the Montanists objected to the use of the portion of the Gospel (Jn. 14:16) where Jesus promised to send the Paraclete.⁸⁶ They maintained that the Holy Spirit was still speaking to men in the New Prophecies and visions as was promised long ago. As a Montanist, Tertullian maintained

⁸¹ *De Fuga in Persecutione* 14.3.

⁸² *Adversus Praxean* I.7 ff. This differentiation between ψυχικός and πνευματικός comes from Paul I Corinthians 2:14; 15:44–46.

⁸³ Osborn, *Tertullian*, p. 251.

⁸⁴ *De Pudicitia* XXI.17; Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, p. 366; Labriolle, *La crise montaniste*, p. 357; T. D. Barnes, “Tertullian’s Scorpice,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 20 (1969): 113.

⁸⁵ *De Pudicitia* XXI.

⁸⁶ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III.II.9.

that Catholics committed a sin by quarreling with the Paraclete and refusing to accept the New Prophecy of the Spirit.⁸⁷

Tertullian's other writings were received with abuse and condemnation in subsequent centuries, when a rigid hierarchical chain of command in dogmatic matters was established in the church.

Barnes cites eight types of expressions or ideas found in Tertullian's writings that indicate his Montanist beliefs: referring to Montanus, Priscilla, or Maximilla, and the appeal to the oracles uttered by them; introducing the New Prophecy or rebutting the charges against it; commending the ecstatic state; mentioning spiritual gifts possessed only by the Montanists; describing the Holy Spirit as a paraclete; identifying things and persons with Montanists; separating himself from the things described as "Catholic" Christian; and denigrating the "Catholics" as "psychici."⁸⁸

Twelve treatises in toto were classified as containing expressions of his Montanist views and four as particularly colored by them: *Adversus Valentinianos*, *De Anima*, *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* (written in 206/207); *Adversus Marcionem* (written in 207/208); *De Corona Militis* (written in 208); *De Virginibus Velandis*, *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, *De Fuga in Persecutione* (written in 208/209); *Adversus Praxean*, *De Monogamia*, *De Jejuniis*, *De Pudicitia* (written in 210/211).

EARLY CHRISTIANS AND THE CARTHAGINIAN ENVIRONMENT

Carthage was invaded by the Romans in 146 B.C.E., restored since 28 B.C.E., and became a thriving center where the new religion was tolerated for a long time. All religions coexisted in the city, and we know that Jews and Christians even had a common cemetery. Nothing is known about Christianity in Carthage before Tertullian's writings or about its origin, though many theories abound.⁸⁹ It probably arrived in North Africa late in the second century, and increasing evidence points to the fact that it originated in the Jewish community. Though Judaism and Christianity or rather Messianism seems to have separated in Palestine during the years of the Jewish War of 66–73, this is not necessarily so in other parts of the Roman Empire.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *De Jejuniis* XIII.

⁸⁸ Barnes, *Tertullian*, p. 55.

⁸⁹ Auguste Audollent, *Carthage Romaine* (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, Editeur, 1901), p. 435; E. Babelou, *Carthage* (Paris: Leroux, 1896), p.175; W. H. C. Frend, *Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000; reprint of 1952 edition), p. 87; W. H. C. Frend, *The Archaeology of Early Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996); Barnes, *Tertullian*.

⁹⁰ Frend, "Town and Country in the Early Christian Centuries"; "The Early Christian Church in Carthage," in *Town and Country in the Early Christian Centuries*, pp. 21–40; "Jews and Christians in Third-Century Carthage," in *ibid.*, pp. 185–194; W. H. C. Frend, "Early Christianity and Society: A Jewish Legacy in the Pre-Constantine Era," in *Archaeology*

The view that in Carthage and in Africa, as in other parts of the Roman Empire, Christian preaching originated in the Jewish community was postulated by Paul Monceaux in 1901, though he also indicated a possibility of multiple sources for Christian development.⁹¹ The existence of a strong and viable Jewish community in Carthage is well documented by historical documents and archaeology,⁹² which also indicate a connection between the Jewish and Christian communities. At the end of the second and beginning of the third century, there were vigorous discussions between these two communities.⁹³ The Jews in Carthage preserved their Hebrew language,⁹⁴ and the Latin versions of the Old and the New Testaments used by the North African Christians were influenced, respectively, by the Hebrew and Jewish-Christian *Gospel of Thomas*. The Latin text of the scripture used by Tertullian and the Christians was probably inherited from the Jewish synagogues when Christians still formed part of the synagogue.⁹⁵ In the synagogues, the Hebrew text was read with a simultaneous translation into Latin. And such a custom of reading the Hebrew text was retained in many Christian churches in the middle of the second century throughout Asia and Africa.

Many Jewish traditions were followed by the Christians in Carthage: the use of the *Gospel of Thomas*, which emphasized the role of James as undisputed head of the church; the name *Nazarenes* applied by the Jews for Christians,⁹⁶ a term used for a Christian-Jewish sect, according to Epiphanius;⁹⁷ Christian observance of the food laws imposed on Gentile converts at the Council of Jerusalem in 48/49;⁹⁸ the continued use by a Cyprian congregation of the Jewish name of “corban” for collection box in the church;⁹⁹ the observance, in Tertullian’s time and in Augustine’s time, of the Jewish Sabbath by some African churches;¹⁰⁰ an assembly of seventy bishops plus the presiding or convening bishop at various important occasions, modeled on the institutional

and History, pp. 53–71; W. H. C. Frend, *Religion Popular and Unpopular in the Early Christian Centuries* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1976), chap. IV, “A Note on Tertullian and the Jews.”

⁹¹ Paul Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l’Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu’à l’invasion arabe* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1901), pp. 7–9; Marcel Simon, “Le judaïsme berbère dans l’Afrique ancienne,” in *Recherches d’histoire judéo-chrétienne* (Paris: Mouton, 1962), pp. 30–87.

⁹² J. Ferron, *Inscriptions juives de Carthage*, Cahiers de Byrsa 1 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1951), pp. 175–206.

⁹³ *Adversus Judaeos* I.

⁹⁴ *Apologeticum* XVIII.

⁹⁵ Frend, in *Town and Country*, chap. XVII.

⁹⁶ *Apologeticum* III.5; *Adversus Marcionem* IV.8.

⁹⁷ Epiphanius, *The Panarion*, translated by Frank Williams (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), XXIX.7.4.

⁹⁸ *Apologeticum* IX.13.

⁹⁹ Cyprian, *De Operibus et Eleemosynis* 15.

¹⁰⁰ *De Jejunio* XIV; Augustine, *Epistula* 54.2–3.

organization of the Jewish Sanhedrin;¹⁰¹ a strict hierarchical organization of the North African church so vigorously implemented by Cyprian and the monarchical character of the episcopacy already opposed by Tertullian that owe much to the Jewish habits; and the appointment of lay elders in the church as secular administrators, following a practice used in the synagogues in Italy. The severe and ascetic ethos of African Christianity, its fatalism and view of God as a ruthless and severe ruler, are indicative of its Jewish origin. Also the Christian liturgical rites in Africa differed from those in Rome. One of the most important differences was the insistence by Africans on the rebaptism of the so-called heretics upon their conversion.

Archaeological evidence includes Christian burials found among the Jews in an ancient cemetery at Gamart in Carthage. Also, the excavated Christian complex from the late second or early third century, Damous el Karita, is composed of a church, a baptistery, and a series of cell-like buildings that were constructed over another Jewish cemetery.¹⁰²

Tertullian himself provides us with testimony about the relations with the Jews of his time. He praises the fidelity of the Jews to their traditions but at the same time remains hostile toward them and encourages Christians to surpass Jews in unimportant religious practices. In the words of W. H. C. Frend, "Christianity in Tertullian's hands became a baptized Judaism."¹⁰³ Tertullian most probably participated in debates and discussions with Jewish apologists.¹⁰⁴ During Tertullian's time, Christians had at least one temple, built as noted on the site of a Jewish cemetery, thus indicating its Jewish-Christian origin. Tertullian claimed that before the Law of Moses God instituted an unwritten law in nature that was understood by all those preceding Moses. Subsequently, the Law of Moses was instituted and imparted to the Gentiles as well. Thus, he considered Christianity a genuine successor to Judaism. For him, Judaism was an unchanging, fossilized religion in which Jews denied that the Messiah had already come. Tertullian considered that the Christians inherited the privileged position of the Jews as people of God.¹⁰⁵ To prove from the scripture that Jesus was a Messiah, he wrote six chapters on the argument from the biblical prophets.¹⁰⁶ Both groups, Christians and Jews, viewed each other with hostility and persecuted each other. Hippolytus (170–236) reports, for example, that Callistus, after becoming bishop of Rome (r. 217–222), invaded a synagogue

¹⁰¹ A council summoned by Agrippinus in 250 C.E., which declared that those baptized by a cleric not in communion with the church should be rebaptized. Cyprian, *Epistula* 71.4; 73.3; Augustine, *De Unico Baptismo* 13.22; Cyprian, *Epistula* 72; 75.1. Council of Carthage of 311 summoned by Securus of Tigisis for the election of a bishop of Carthage.

¹⁰² Frend, in *Town and Country*, chaps. XVI, XVII.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, chap. XVII, p. 192.

¹⁰⁴ *Adversus Judaeos* I.1; *De Jejunio* XVI; *De Spectaculis* XXV; XXX.5; *De Monogamia* VII.1.

¹⁰⁵ *Adversus Judaeos* I; II; III; XIII.11.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, VII–XII.

one Sabbath and disrupted the service. He was sentenced by the prefect of the city, Fascianus, to labor in mines in Sardinia and later was released.¹⁰⁷ But at that time Christianity was illegal, and such hostility could only intensify once Christianity became a state religion. Tertullian, like most church fathers, supported persecution of the so-called heretics and even developed a concept that “the end justifies the means”¹⁰⁸ as a way of coercing the heretics and perhaps others into his faith.¹⁰⁹

Christians in Carthage were still called Nazarenes¹¹⁰ in the first decade of the third century and represented a very conspicuous group of people with a miserable outlook on life and fanatical adherence to their religious expectations. They held martyrs in special honor and regarded baptism as an act rejecting the values of the Hellenic world and joining the exclusive world of God’s elected.¹¹¹ They awaited the imminent second coming, and in their conception of God and righteousness, they rejected any joy of life in normal daily activities as sinful. Everything – money, social status, enjoyment of food, sex – all this became immoral and hateful.¹¹² They hated secular studies and forbade military service and entering public offices.¹¹³ Tertullian accepted the view of the Apologists, who condemned the Hellenes as immoral people, ridiculed their religion, and declared their gods as demons and as immoral as their worshipers.¹¹⁴ Tertullian symbolized this type of Christian mentality and probably as a layperson was not persecuted by the Romans.

The next Carthaginian ecclesiastical leader, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (r. 248–258), died as a martyr. He represented a more rigorous and exclusive religious ideology than Tertullian. His ideology was based on the Bible, the cult of martyrdom, and inspiration by the Holy Spirit. It promised salvation only to those who were within the church and eternal damnation to all schismatics, “heretics,” Jews, and Hellenes, to all those who were outside the church.¹¹⁵ Only the church and the ecclesiastics could provide salvation. Moreover, only the priests, themselves in a state without sin, could provide the means of salvation to the church members.¹¹⁶ Christians who failed to adhere fanatically to the confession of faith in the face of persecution were considered traitors and committing the gravest sin. The problem with such *traditores* became acute and

¹⁰⁷ Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omn. Haeresium* IX.7, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. V, pp. 9–153.

¹⁰⁸ *Scorpiace* V.7.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, II.1.

¹¹⁰ *Adversus Marcionem* IV. 8.

¹¹¹ *Apologeticum* XXXIX.1.

¹¹² *De Spectaculis* XIV.2.

¹¹³ *De Idolatria* I.1; X.1; X.7; XIII.1; XVIII.1; XIX.1.

¹¹⁴ *Ad Nationes* I.9, 12; II.13; *De Testimonio Animae* II.7; Eusebius, *H.E.* 4.3.

¹¹⁵ Cyprian, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. VI, “On the Unity of the Catholic Church”; *Epistula* LXXXIII.2.

¹¹⁶ Cyprian, *Epistula* LXVII.

glaring in 311 when Archdeacon Caecilian was elected bishop of Carthage. The opposition led by a certain Donatus of Casae Nigrae led to a schism in the church and formation of a Donatist church that survived in Carthage to the time of the capture of Carthage by the Arabs in 698.¹¹⁷ The Donatists initially dominated in Carthage, but from 411 the Catholics got the upper hand with varying success until the invasion by the Vandals in 439. Again Catholic toleration was restored by Hilderic, a Vandal ruler (r. 523–530), and their domination was established by Justinian in 535 until the invasion by the Arabs.

The Carthaginian church inherited from the Jews an authoritarian system of governance, and the authority of the bishop was absolute. No crime was worse than disobedience to a bishop, and it deserved severe punishment.¹¹⁸ In such an environment the dominant doctrines among both Catholics and Donatists were the doctrines of predestination, grace, original sin, and final judgment. The church also assumed many social and legal functions in the society of North Africa. In the early days, the Day of Judgment was imminent; repentance and baptism cleansed away man's sins. With time came the realization that the Day of Judgment may be remote and then a problem arose: the clever and credulous, like Constantine, deferred their baptism to avoid the risk of eternal condemnation. Gradually a penitential system was developed. A gradation was developed for every type of delinquency, and renunciation of pleasure on earth offered greater pleasure after resurrection.¹¹⁹

The first persecution in Africa occurred in 180. A very interesting document was preserved to our time, namely, the transcript of the trial entitled *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* of the first Christians persecuted at this time.¹²⁰ Twelve Christians from the small town of Scilla were persecuted because they refused to recognize the rule of the emperor. One of the accused, Speratus, made such a statement: "The empire of this world I know not; but rather I serve that God, whom no man hath seen, nor with these eyes can see." The Romans were very reasonable and the proconsul, Vigellius Saturninus, insisted on reflection and gave them time to reconsider. The document attests also to the fanatical character of the Christians who were eager to die and even actively aspired to death: "We give thanks to God.... Today we are martyrs in heaven, thanks be to God."

Other documents give a true account of the state of the Christian Church of that epoch. A certain document entitled *Passion of Perpetua* records the martyrdom of a lady of high birth, Vibia Perpetua, and her companions in the

¹¹⁷ Frend, *The Donatist Church*.

¹¹⁸ Cyprian, *Epistula* LIV.5.

¹¹⁹ *De Spectaculis* XXX.1.

¹²⁰ Herbert Musurillo, ed., *The Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*, introduction, texts, and translation by Herbert Musurillo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972). Also in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. III; W. H. C. Frend, "The North African Cult of Martyrs from Apocalyptic to Hero-Worship," in *Archaeology and History*, pp. 154–167.

year 203.¹²¹ The document throws light on the fundamentalist character of the early Christians. Perpetua was accustomed to converse with God and received a message in her dreams: “She ascended to heaven on a bronze ladder – saw a vast garden, with an elderly shepherd milking a sheep and around him many thousand in white. The shepherd welcomed Perpetua and gave her a piece of the cheese from the sheep’s milk.” Her next dream describes the torment of her deceased brother Deinocrates and the prisoners who prayed for him. In another dream, he is represented as not suffering anymore. These writings represented a new fundamentalist eschatological theology of the immediate realization of the new prophecy: “God promised to pour his spirit on his servants in the last days, so that they should prophesy, so that young men should see visions and old men dream dreams.”¹²² Also from such writings theologians could develop later the doctrine of a purgatory via the Gnostics and Origen. For Perpetua her dreams signified that her brother had been released from punishment and admitted to bliss.¹²³ In the dream of another martyr, Saturus, when the martyrs enter the presence of God, the bishop and the priest are excluded. They are isolated, and their hope lies only in the martyrs, at whose feet they fell.¹²⁴ Though the writing is classified as Montanist, it reflects an open dissension from the clergy, which were not up to the moral standard.

Perpetua was considered a Catholic martyr and not a Montanist martyr. In the fourth century, a church was dedicated to her memory, and Augustine preached sermons quoting from the *Passion*,¹²⁵ which he treated as a canonical work.¹²⁶ Perpetua’s anniversary was listed in the official calendar of Rome, probably since 336 C.E.

The wish for martyrdom is still more emphasized by the assistance martyrs offer to their persecutors. Saturus surrendered himself out of his own volition. Perpetua came to near suicide when she herself thrust the sword into her own throat by pushing the hand of the gladiator. And for this act she was applauded. The author of the story explains that because the devil was afraid of Perpetua, she could never have been killed had she not wished it herself.¹²⁷

This active attitude and this seeking of martyrdom are typical for the early Christians, as represented by the early Christian writings and Apologists.¹²⁸ The death of a righteous man, and only Christians were righteous, was an occasion

¹²¹ *The Martyrdom (Passion) of Perpetua and Felicitas*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. III; Frend, “The North African Cult of Martyrs from Apocalyptic to Hero-Worship.”

¹²² Acts 2.17; Joel 3.1.

¹²³ *Passion* II.3, 4.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, IV.

¹²⁵ Augustine, in *Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. XIV, *De natura et origine animae* II.14; III.12; IV.26, 27.

¹²⁶ Augustine, *De natura et origine animae* I.12.

¹²⁷ *Passion* VI.4.

¹²⁸ Athenagoras, *Legatio* II.1; Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* IV; *Ad Nationes* I; *Apologeticum* I.1, 12; *Ad Scapulam* I.2; V.1, 2.

for rejoicing. Moreover, the denial of death and its rejection was an evil to be avoided.¹²⁹ Martyrdom became a baptism by blood.¹³⁰

But the opinions on martyrdom and baptism by blood varied. Peter, bishop of Alexandria (r. 300–311), who first fled persecution in Alexandria, condemned enthusiasm for martyrdom and advocated fleeing persecution.¹³¹ Unfortunately, upon returning to Alexandria, the unsuspecting bishop was arrested by a secret agent of Emperor Maximinus Dada and beheaded in 311.

Tertullian assumed the attitude that martyrdom was a duty and necessity that was good and profitable and ordained by God.¹³² Gnostics, however, denied that God desired martyrdom from his followers. According to Tertullian, persecution was a test of faith, and he condemned flight as wrong and against the will of God.¹³³ There were many Christian volunteers for martyrdom at the end of the second century.¹³⁴

At the same time Tertullian criticized Catholics for developing a cult of martyrs to whom special spiritual powers were ascribed.¹³⁵ The Hellenes also disagreed with this attitude.¹³⁶

The sources of the Christian doctrine of martyrdom go back to their Jewish origin. Martyrdom was especially glorified during the Maccabean War of 165–162 B.C.E. against the dynasty of the Seleucids in Palestine. Jews under the Greek rulers were being forced to abandon the Law and ways of their fathers.¹³⁷ They would not, however, deviate from their ways and gladly submitted to martyrdom in defense of Jewish customs.¹³⁸ Because martyrdom was rewarded in Jewish doctrines by the promise of resurrection, it was a means of personal salvation and, at the same time, represented a patriotic act, as it was considered an act of atonement on behalf of Israel as a whole. Martyrdom was considered being a witness to the Law¹³⁹ and an integral part of the Jewish doctrine. Josephus stated that it became natural to all Jews to esteem their books as containing divine doctrines and to willingly die for them.¹⁴⁰

¹²⁹ Justin Martyr, *I Apol.* 8; 57; *II Apol.* 4.

¹³⁰ *Passion of Perpetua* VI.1, 4.

¹³¹ Migne, PG 18.467; Tim Vivian, *St. Peter of Alexandria: Bishop and Martyr* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

¹³² *Scorpiace* II.1; III.5.

¹³³ *De Fuga in Persecutione* IV; V.

¹³⁴ *Ad Scapulam* V; *Apologeticum* L.3; *De Spectaculis* I.

¹³⁵ *De Pudicitia* I; *Passion of Perpetua* IV; *The Death of Peregrine*, in *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, complete with exceptions specified in the preface, translated by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, vols. 1–4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903, 1949), vol. 4, pp. 79–95.

¹³⁶ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* XI.3; *Apologeticum* L.1, 15.

¹³⁷ *I Maccabees* 1:44–50.

¹³⁸ *II Maccabees* 6:1–7:42.

¹³⁹ *IV Maccabees* 12:16.

¹⁴⁰ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion* I.8, in *Complete Works*, translated by William Whiston, forward by William Sanford LaSor (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981).

No wonder that for the Christians martyrdom became witness to the new law and its glorification subsequently became a part of the Christian ethos.¹⁴¹ They simply imitated Jesus who was the ideal martyr. They believed martyrdom would hasten the second coming and atone for their sins.¹⁴²

In the subsequent years after the Maccabean War when the Hasmonaean dynasty accepted the Greek ways, the conservative, radical, and pious Jews separated themselves from the ruling party and the Temple in groups (most probably those like the Essenes), similar to that represented by the Qumran scrolls, and prepared themselves for the arrival of the expected earthly Messiahs to rule in the Kingdom of Heaven.¹⁴³ From such a group originated John the Baptist and his messianic message. We do not know if Jesus was only a personification of an ideal Prophet-Messiah or if he depicted a certain political leader of the Jews who was idealized and subsequently a myth was created around his personality. Nevertheless, Jesus of the Gospels maintained a messianic prophetic tradition that was political in its main principle, and at the same time he reversed the current Jewish moral ethos. His message found popular support in rural Palestine. His ideas were subsequently incorporated into a new religious movement created by Paul on the basis of the messianic figure of Jesus and the Philonic concept of the Logos.¹⁴⁴ Paul grasped the idea of universality in the “universal” Roman Empire and intended to spread his sect not only among the Jews but also among the Gentiles, especially among the city dwellers who could read the Greek Septuagint and were familiar with the Greek religious and philosophical ethos. In Paul’s doctrines there was no implementation of the social teachings of Jesus. The fall of Jerusalem in 70 accelerated the separation of the new movement from the Judaism in Palestine but it still remained connected to the synagogue in the Hellenistic world probably until the beginning of the third century.

Carthage was also the site of activity of Hermogenes, an important nonconformist teacher.¹⁴⁵ Tertullian devoted two treatises to Hermogenes: *Adversus Hermogenem* and *De Testimonio Animae*. Among other events in Carthage, Augustine mentioned a gathering of bishops (about seventy of them) between 190 and 230. There was also a council in Carthage in 256 organized by Bishop Cyprian.

¹⁴¹ W. H. C. Frend, “Persecutions: Some Links between Judaism and the Early Church,” in *Religion Popular and Unpopular in the Early Christian Centuries* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1976), chap. I.

¹⁴² *H.E.* 1.1–2; Ignatius, *Ad Romanos* II, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1.

¹⁴³ Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996); *The Community Rule*, 1QS OIX.9–11; J. A. T. Robinson, “The Baptism of John and the Qumran Community,” *Harvard Theological Review* 50 (1957): 175–190.

¹⁴⁴ W. L. Knox, *St Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939, 1961); A. N. Wilson, *Paul: The Mind of the Apostle* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997).

¹⁴⁵ Eusebius, *H.E.* 4.24.1.

TERTULLIAN'S THEORY OF THE TRINITY

The most important treatise of Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, was written in the form of a polemic occasioned by the reappearance of an explanation of the New Testament story and propagated by Praxeas, a contemporary writer. On this background Tertullian almost incidentally formulated his theory of the Trinity, which was to become the primary formulation for post-Nicene Christianity. The Reformation, though it produced a radical movement focused on reforming the theological doctrines, in its main core movement it did not reform the main theological doctrines. Thus, the Protestant churches inherited the Catholic trinitarian doctrine. But despite centuries of the theological tradition of the trinitarian doctrine, Christians remain in practice tritheists.

Insofar as there was one God, and Jesus was a man and a Messiah (the anointed) and, as such, was considered God's earthly "son" in a metaphorical sense, which designation had in the Hebrew environment a specific social and political implication, there was no theological conflict. However, once Jesus was identified as a God, and therefore as a Son of God in the Greek naturalistic conception, which was a popular assumption in the Greek environment, the problem arose; because now there were two Gods, two divine individuals, and a formula had to be developed to accommodate the contradiction and to explain the ontological status of Jesus' personhood.

Many theories were developed trying to interpret mythical statements found in the scriptures according to the feelings, attitude, and intellectual background of the author. Christian writers tried to reconcile these statements using the various religious and philosophical doctrines current at the time of the interpreter. In the time of Tertullian, we already find fully developed Logos theories based on Middle Platonic doctrines. Another early doctrine was that of Marcion, who differentiated, on moral grounds, between the God of the Old Testament and the God of Jesus and Paul of the New Testament. Still others, such as the Gnostics, represented Divinity as unity in multiplicity.¹⁴⁶ There is obviously no logical or rational premise why one doctrine should be better than the other. The proper approach would be to find out what the statements found in the scriptures meant for the writers of these scriptures. However, this was not the chosen approach and each author interpreted the scriptures and developed his own theory according to his emotional or intellectual preferences.

The Logos Christology was developed to soften the impact of bitheism. In Logos speculation, it is inherent that the divine prolation should be of the very same essence (substance) as God; on the other hand, as a prolation, it should be capable of acting as a distinct being. But this could not provide for the intended naturalistic identity of Jesus as the Son of God with one God, that is, with

¹⁴⁶ E. Thomassen, "The Structure of the Transcendent World in the Tripartite Tractate," *Vigiliae Christianae* 34, no.4 (1980): 358-375.

all that God is, as was required in a popular and highly emotionally charged understanding of his divinity. And it was so because the Logos speculation implied a reduced status of deity for the prolation in diminished grade and a temporal rather than an eternal status.

The starting point for all speculations was the Middle Platonic–Philonic conception of the transcendent God who mediates through the activity of an intermediate being. Under the influence of the scriptural passages like Proverbs 8 and John 1, interpreted in a popular Greek fashion, the historical Jesus was identified with the Greek Logos, and the Logos Christology was developed. Its essence was postulation of the existence of a cosmic being whose function was to perform the work of creation and to govern the cosmos for the transcendent God. The Christian Logos was thus conceived in relation to temporal and spatial things; therefore, it was a subordinate God. Its origin was through a process of emanation or prolation from God the Father. A corollary theory was developed by the Gnostics who emphasized the necessary process of the evolution of several emanations from the primal cosmic deity. Gnostics wanted a hierarchy of lesser divinities between the transcendent source deity and the material world itself.¹⁴⁷

The evolution of the Christian Logos theory emphasized the “personal” character of the deity; therefore, the act of emanation was a voluntary act on the part of God. Christians could look upon Jesus identified with the Logos as a part of God that was charged with the function of the creation of the universe and its governance, while being subordinate to the will of God. These were the characteristics of the Christian and the Middle Platonic–Philonic Logos. Through this device, Christians could preserve, to a certain degree, the unity of God and the deity of the historical Jesus who was the Logos of God, that is, the temporal protrusion of the deity for the purpose of creating the world, time-space, and mediating instrument of the deity in his dealings with the world and humans.

THE USE BY TERTULLIAN OF THE CHRISTIAN LOGOS THEORY

In his earlier writings Tertullian fully used the Logos Christology, which supplied a general paradigm for eventually building his own interpretation. This aspect of Tertullian’s theology was a conscious effort to integrate Christianity and classical Greek culture.¹⁴⁸ In *Apology* he expounded the divinity of Christ and identified him with the Logos of Numenius and Greek Stoic philosophy:

We have been taught that he [the Logos] proceeds forth from God, and in that procession he is generated; so that he is the Son of God, and is called God from

¹⁴⁷ Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, translation edited by Robert McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

¹⁴⁸ Sider, *Ancient Rhetoric*, p. 128.

unity of substance with God. For God, too, is a Spirit.... This Christ is Spirit of Spirit, and God of God, as light of light is kindled. The material matrix remains entire and unimpaired, though you derive from it any number of shoots possessed of its qualities; so, too, that which has come forth out of God is at once God and the Son of God, and the two are one. In this way also, as he is Spirit of Spirit and God of God, he is made a second in manner of existence – in position, not in nature; and he did not withdraw from the original source, but went forth. This ray of God, then, as it was always foretold in ancient times, descending into a certain virgin, and made flesh in her womb, is in his birth God and man united.¹⁴⁹

Tertullian shared with the Apologists, who developed the Logos theory, the idea of the transcendence of God and impossibility of his direct relation with a world of time and space,¹⁵⁰ the doctrine that was expressed in terms of the invisibility of God and in the fullness of his majesty. He shared also the current conception of the Logos as the form of God that is connected with the origin and governance of the world. Prolation of the Logos took place only for and with the world as a necessary mediator to perform a work that God could not perform. Thus, the Logos assumed its “own form” when God said “Let there be light.” Only then God was pleased to put forth into their respective substances and forms the things he had planned and ordered within himself. “He first put forth [*protulit*] the Word (Logos) who was within him his own inseparable Reason and Wisdom in order that all things might be made through him.”¹⁵¹

Though the scripture in Genesis refers to light as a physical phenomenon connected with day and night, Tertullian, in contradiction, ascribes to it a metaphysical and ontological meaning. There is no doubt that Tertullian’s concept of metaphysical light, which was put forth by God as the Logos (Word), is derived from the Greek theology of the second century.¹⁵²

Tertullian also shared the view with the Apologists that the Logos is not God in his entirety but only a “portion” (*portio*) of God, in the same way as is the ray in which there is not the whole but only a “portion” of the sun. The difference between them is in measure, not of mode. Tertullian claimed, “The Father is the entire substance, but the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole.”¹⁵³ The Logos was to him necessarily a produced, and a reduced, divinity, with its substance spirit or *pneuma*, brought to a level that could become creator and principle of the world, of time and space, made of four elements. Tertullian also accorded with the current conceptions in thinking of the prolation of the Logos as a voluntary act of the Logos and the will of God, rather than a necessary movement within the divine essence. The Logos Son came into being by the

¹⁴⁹ *Apologeticum* XXI.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, XVII.

¹⁵¹ *Adversus Praxean* VI, XII.

¹⁵² Hans Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy*, nouvelle édition par Michel Tardieu (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978).

¹⁵³ *Adversus Praxean* IX.

will of God and remains in being to fulfill the will of God; and at last, when he had fulfilled the will of God, he retires once more into the divine unity. The prolated Logos Son is a temporary being who is dependent on the will of God. As such, he is subordinate to and less than the Father, subject to the Father's will, and after accomplishing his mission, he returns to the divine substance.¹⁵⁴ Only the Father has the fullness of his majesty and divinity, and by reason of his derivation, the Son stands to the Father as the ray to the sun. Thus, the Son is second in every sense of the word.¹⁵⁵

As to the temporary origin of the Logos Son, Tertullian was very explicit in his treatise *Adversus Hermogenem*, where he clearly stated that the Son had a beginning and origin. His argumentation came from the analysis of the terms God and Lord. God is, according to Tertullian, a "designation of the substance itself," so the name God always existed. However, the name Lord is a designation of power, not of substance; therefore, the title Lord was added after that over which God is Lord (i.e., the creation) "began to exist." In the same manner, God is a Father and a Judge:

But he has not always been Father and Judge, merely on the ground of his having always been God. For he could not have been the Father previous to the Son, nor a Judge previous to sin. There was, however, a time when neither sin existed with him, nor the Son; the former was to constitute the Lord and Judge, and the latter a Father.¹⁵⁶

But later Tertullian distinguished between the uttered Logos, a Sermo, and the unuttered Logos, Ratio, which was an integral part of the divinity:

For before all things God was alone – being in himself and for himself universe, and space, and all things. Moreover, he was alone, because there was nothing external to him but himself. Yet even not then was he alone; for he had with him that which he possessed in himself, that is to say his own Reason. For God is rational and Reason was first in him; and so all things were from himself.¹⁵⁷

But certainly God's Reason was not an individual being as the prolated Son. The prolation of the Logos Son was a temporary mechanism to accomplish work by a transcendent God.

OPPOSITION TO MONARCHIANISM

Tertullian was deeply influenced by such doctrines developed by the Apologists,¹⁵⁸ and the occasion for rethinking this scheme was provided to

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., IV, XXII, XXIII.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., XIV.

¹⁵⁶ *Adversus Hermogenem* III.

¹⁵⁷ *Adversus Praxean* V.

¹⁵⁸ Warfield, *Tertullian*, pp. 3–109.

Tertullian by the spread of the monarchian doctrine. The term was given to a set of beliefs that emphasized God as one being to uphold his “monarchy” or rule of one person in opposition to the Logos theology of Justin Martyr. The Logos theory left much to be desired in the Christian doctrines of God and of his Mediator. It could not satisfy the rigorous demand for the unity of God, and it diminished the divinity of Jesus demanded by the popular religious sentiments. Monarchianism was one of the solutions that attempted to elevate Jesus to absolute equality with God, but by doing this it abolished the distinction between God and the Logos. In further speculations, the Logos would need another intermediary, for, if a primeval God would now have the same function and tasks as the Logos, then his transcendence would be abolished as well. Monarchians arose in protest to those religious views that threatened the full divinity of Jesus. Hippolytus quotes the monarchian Noetus saying in a highly emotionally charged voice: “How can I be doing wrong in glorifying Christ?”¹⁵⁹

We learn from Tertullian that one such author was his contemporary, Praxeas, who, adhering strictly to the formula of absolute unity of God, developed a theory that the New Testamental Father himself descended into the virgin, was born as Jesus, and suffered on the cross.

Because such a doctrine did not fit into Tertullian’s own sensitivity, he described these speculations as the product of the “devil” and morally condemned them. Such speculations were termed heresy, and the church fathers developed a series of very elaborate theories morally condemning independent speculation, and they prescribed legal persecution in order to combat any independent thought.

We learn from Tertullian that Praxeas came from Asia to Rome. Tertullian characterized him as a proud man who had been in prison, thus trying to denigrate him on moral grounds as well. It was Praxeas who instigated the revocation by a bishop of Rome of the acknowledgment of the prophetic gift by Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla. Praxeas thus did a twofold service to the “devil in Rome”: “He drove away prophecy, and he brought in heresy; he put to flight the Paraclete, and he crucified the Father.”¹⁶⁰ Praxeas, according to Tertullian, disappeared from the scenery. He may have been reprimanded and may have returned to the church. His doctrine, however, did not die, because it found a new outburst in Africa and was now everywhere. Such was the situation that faced Tertullian and resulted in his reaction.

The doctrine of Praxeas was described in common terminology as monarchianism or patripassianism, and there is only one mention of Praxeas independent of Tertullian, namely, in the work considered to be pseudo-Tertullianic, *Adversus omnes haereses*.¹⁶¹ We also know about the origin of

¹⁵⁹ Hippolytus, *Against the Heresy of Noetus* 1, in *Refutatio omnium haeresium*.

¹⁶⁰ *Adversus Praxean*, I.4.

¹⁶¹ Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses* VIII.

monarchianism from the account given by Hippolytus, a contemporary of Tertullian, who wrote in Rome. Hippolytus claimed that a certain Noetus of Smyrna derived this theory from the doctrines of Heraclitus. His disciple, Epigonus, propagated it in Rome together with his follower Cleomenes.¹⁶² The theory was adopted by Bishop Callistus of Rome (fl. ca. 210).¹⁶³

TERTULLIAN'S DOCTRINE OF THE *OIKONOMIA* OF GOD
AND ITS STOIC SOURCE

After having condemned Praxeas's doctrine, Tertullian explains the true belief accepted by those who are "better instructed by the Paraclete," implying that his theory of the Trinity was a product of Montanist speculation. God is one, but has the following internal structure, described in Tertullian's terminology as "dispensation" or "economy": he has a physical pneumatic Son (*Filius*), his Word (*Sermo*), who proceeded from himself. Through this Son all things are made, so he had a function of creating and maintaining the world. The Son was sent by the Father into the virgin and was born as a man and God, as Son of Man and as Son of God (*Filium hominis et Filium Dei*), and is called Jesus the Anointed (Christ). After his death he was resurrected by the Father, taken into heaven (*in caelo*) to be seated at the right side of the Father. He will come to judge all men, dead and alive, before the institution of God's Kingdom on earth. In the meantime the Father in heaven sent the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete (*Spiritus sanctum, Paracletum*).¹⁶⁴

Before Tertullian, there was a tradition of the unity of the Godhead as a concept derived from the Hebrew tradition and a tradition of the triad, of his appearance and function, as formulated by the Apologists and based on Philonic hypostatization of the divine powers. Today Christians speculate that the trinitarian doctrine was present in the baptismal formula, but it was Tertullian who formulated it explicitly.

Tertullian's "rule of faith" is based on the specific interpretation of the story found in the Gospels and the formula of the baptismal invocation found in all early Christian writers. This rule also imposed on him the necessity to formulate a doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The Apologists were preoccupied with the Greek concepts of the Logos and treated the Holy Spirit in a fashion analogical to the Logos. Tertullian made the Holy Spirit related to the Son as the Son is related to the Father.

The original sense of the crucial terms used for the development of Tertullian's doctrine is already changed in the Greek environment. And Tertullian makes a special reference to the "beginning of the Gospel" (*ab initio*

¹⁶² Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* IX.7.1; X.27.1.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, X.27.3.

¹⁶⁴ *Adversus Praxean* II; *De Praescriptione* XIII.

euangelii), presumably that of John 1:1, as the source of his opinion, to him the true and original story. Any later theory must be considered a heresy.¹⁶⁵

The innovation introduced by Tertullian was the ascription of the relative unity to the triadic entities found in the Christian Logos theory as the unity of substance. Starting from the baptismal formula, Tertullian distinguished three persons and prolations with specific names in one God who is the common substance as a mode of existence of God and his economy, that is, his internal organization. Though Tertullian never defined what he meant by the term “person,” we must understand this word as a depiction of a distinct divine individual with distinct quality and function. Substance is the unifying element in the divinity, whereas person is the differentiating characteristic in the life of God. If so, then there is no real division in the Godhead, only purely relative modal distinction. But then Tertullian is in contradiction when he claims a reality of the Word, and of the Holy Spirit by extension, as a *substantiva res* and a rational substance. In any case, it seems to be a verbal device to reconcile a popular triadic interpretation of the terms found in the New Testament and in the baptismal formula with the requirement of the oneness of God.

Such a term has obvious origin from the analogy with the human entity, which is defined by a set of physical and behavioral characteristics, and its status is regulated by laws in a society. This unity of the three entities is produced by the unity of substance, though its structure, that is, distribution of one into the three, still remains a mystery (*oikonomiae sacramentum*). Nevertheless, Tertullian found a formula that would verbally justify the claim: the three (the Father, the Son, and the [Holy] Spirit) are formed not in condition (*statu*), but in degree or sequence (*gradu*); not in substance (*substantia*), but in form (*forma*); not in power (*potentate*), but in manifestation (*specie*); yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as he is one God, from whom (*unus Deus ex quo*) these degrees and forms and manifestations are designated (*deputantur*), under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And Tertullian promises to show how these three entities can be differentiated numerically without division. Moreover, he developed a concept of the prolation of the Holy Spirit from the Son, as the Son is a prolation of the Father.¹⁶⁶

In Tertullian’s understanding, heaven is a concrete physical place located above the earth, the abode of divine beings in the pneumatic realm of the world whose substance must be “ether,” “noetic fire,” or “*pneuma*,” in accordance with the current view.¹⁶⁷ This must be also the substance of all divine beings.

¹⁶⁵ *Adversus Praxean* II.2.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, II.4.

¹⁶⁷ This view was accepted in all antiquity, and its essence was that the divinity is an intelligent igneous, or aerial agent, either permeating nature and matter or transcendent to it and impassible. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (hereafter *SVF*), collegit Ioannes Arnim, vols. I–III (Stuttgartiae: in Aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1964), II, 310, 306, 320; Hans Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy*.

Tertullian faces a problem, however: how to reconcile the unity of God with the statements about the three entities, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit found in the New Testament writings, but understood and interpreted in the Greek naturalistic mode. Tertullian is aware that his opinion is not the only one; on the contrary, the majority of believers cannot understand how one can believe in one God who may have his own dispensation in three entities. In popular folkloric interpretation, they were considered three divinities. Thus, the pressing issue was finding a formula that would reconcile their mutual relationship with the requirement of the unity of the divinity. He could not accept the solution proposed by Praxeas, who reasoned that one cannot believe in one God in any other way than by saying that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the very same self, because this would imply that the Father, or God, suffered himself on the cross.

The task of Tertullian, therefore, was to develop a formula by which the complete deity of Jesus and the reality of his identity as the Logos or the Mediator are distinct from the source deity yet without creating two Gods. In Logos theory, the distinction was introduced between the transcendent God and the derivative God, the absolute and the relative, and special problems arise when we consider now the question of the eternity or temporality of this distinction.

The new trinitarian formulation evidently was not a popular or accepted belief during the time of Tertullian because he emphasized that the simple believers, and they are always in the majority, may have problems understanding this trinitarian assumption. Instead, they accept a triadic division of the unity of God, whereas, according to Tertullian, the triadic doctrine is a misunderstanding of God's economy (*oikonomia*) or dispensation/disposition (*dispensatio* or *dispositio*).

Tertullian was a profoundly Stoic philosopher, and he developed his concept of the trinitarian God from the analysis of four general Stoic logical categories. His theory is based on the assumption of unity and unchangeability of the substance and the relative distinctiveness of the three members of the divinity, that is, the Spirit as the substance of God. His concept of substance and the Spirit as the material substance of God is unquestionably Stoic and used to describe the nature of God.¹⁶⁸ The source of these assumptions is found in the four categories of being as formulated by the Stoics: substrates or substances of everything that exists (ὑποκειμενα), qualities (ποιὰ), the modes of existence or dispositions (πῶς ἔχοντα), and the relative modes or dispositions of existence (πρὸς τί πῶς ἔχοντα).¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ *Adversus Marcionem* II.9; III.6; IV.33; V.8; *Adversus Praxean* XIV, XXVI; *De Oratione* I; *Apologeticum* XXVIII. G. C. Stead, "Divine Substance in Tertullian," *Journal of Theological Studies* 14 (1963): 46–66.

¹⁶⁹ *SVF*, II.329, 330, 333–335, 369, 371, 373; John M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 152–172.

The term “substrate” or “substance” Stoics applied to the first matter of everything that exists, as a material and corporeal object. The object becomes specific if it acquires qualities that were described as certain matter or *pneuma* with a certain mode of existence.¹⁷⁰ Plutarch reported that, according to the Academy, two doves, for example, are two substances with one quality, whereas the Stoics hold that they are one substance and two qualified entities. He quotes Chrysippus saying that when the universe is destroyed by fire, Zeus, who alone of all gods will survive the conflagration, withdraws into Providence, and the two, presumably distinct entities, will continue to exist as a single substance, ether (ἐπὶ μίᾳς τῆς τοῦ αἰθέρος οὐσίας). According to this Stoic view, everything that exists is present in one substance as the prime matter of all things. Zeus is different, however, from all other particular entities in the sense that he will not disappear by losing his individuality and will return to the action in the next cosmic cycle.

The term “mode of existence” or “disposition” was used to describe the qualitative substrate, not the existential substrate, of the particular thing by which the objects were differentiated.¹⁷¹ For example, in a certain mode of existence, a fist is not a hand, for the fist remains in relation to the hand as to its substrate.¹⁷² The category of the relative mode of existence or relative disposition arose from the distinction between “sweetness,” “bitterness,” and similar things, on the one hand, and “father” and “a person on the right side,” on the other hand. The former objects were distinguished according to a difference that consists in an intrinsic specific property. These objects are different because they refer to something else. The latter category of objects comprises all things that are characterized not by an intrinsic inherent difference but by a simple relation to each other. The “son” and the “person on the right side,” in order to exist as such, depend on something external to them. It is sufficient that the son dies or the person on the right side changes his position that the father and the person on the right side cease to exist without any direct change to any of them, whereas “sweetness” and “bitterness” cannot change unless their internal properties are changed. Therefore, if the relatively disposed things change without being affected themselves because of something else changing its relation to them, it is clear that their existence depends only on their relationship and not on any differentiating factor.¹⁷³

It seems that Tertullian, using such speculations, transposed the logical relationship between objects onto the metaphysical existence of the divine Father and his Son, and also the third entity – the Holy Spirit. Thus, the divine Father and the divine Son have their existence conditioned by their disposition

¹⁷⁰ *SVF*, II.134–151, 301, 318.

¹⁷¹ *SVF*, II.369, 375, 378, 399, 400.

¹⁷² *SVF*, II.379.

¹⁷³ *SVF*, II.403.

only. They are not identical. Moreover, the Father makes a Son and the Son makes a Father by logical relationship, that is, relative disposition.

These terms, economy (*oikonomia*) and disposition, dispensation (*dispositio, dispensatio*), one Greek and the others Latin, which were used in everyday language to designate apportioning or distribution (e.g., of materials), management (e.g., of affairs), stewardship (e.g., of public revenue), arrangement of arguments or words, and the orderly arrangement of time or actions, acquired in Tertullian's usage a metaphysical meaning describing the relative existence of the three divine individuals. The best translation of these terms preserving the Tertullian meaning would be the relative "internal management," "internal structure," or "organization" of God.

Tertullian's critique of monarchianism is also based on the analysis of the term. Tertullian expresses his dissatisfaction with monarchianism by complaining that the Latins attempt to study the "pronunciation" of the word "monarchy," whereas the Greeks refuse to understand the term "economy." He proceeds next to explain the meaning of both terms. Monarchy, according to Tertullian, means rule by one, but it does not preclude the monarch from having a son or from ministering his own monarchy by a few agents. Even if the monarchy is administered by another person most closely connected with the monarch, for example, his son, that monarchy is not divided and does not cease to be one. Such an idea of the unity of the monarchy projected onto the divine monarchy, where the divine essence is one and is governed by the many Sons of God, was a common concept among the Greeks and non-Greeks as well as attested by Maximus of Tyre (fl. second century) and many other writers:

You will see one according law and assertion in all the earth, that there is one God, the king and father of all things, and many Gods, Sons of God, ruling together with him.¹⁷⁴

By extending the analogy to the divine monarchy, which is administered by so many legions of angels, Tertullian asks:

How came it to pass that God should be thought to suffer division and severance in the Son and in the Holy Ghost, who have the second and the third places assigned to them, and who are so closely joined with the Father in his substance, when he suffers no such [division and severance] in the multitude of so many angels?¹⁷⁵

So the unity of God (monarchy of the king) hinges on the unity of substance (closeness of the king's family or administrators), which is the basis for "internal dispensation" or "economy," that is, the internal organization of God. And there is no doubt about what kind of substance Tertullian had in mind.

¹⁷⁴ Maximus of Tyre, quoted in Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*, translated from the Greek by Thomas Taylor (London: Bertram Dobell and Reeves and Turner, 1895), p. xiv; Iamblichus (260–330 C.E.).

¹⁷⁵ *Adversus Praxean* III.5.

The destruction and overthrow of the monarchy could be brought about by another dominion with its own peculiar status, for example, if some other god is introduced in opposition to the creator, as in the opinions of Marcion, or by many gods, as in the opinion of Valentinus. The other gods would represent, according to Tertullian, a different rule and thus a different substance.

In the eyes of Tertullian, the sameness of the monarchy relies on the sameness of the rule and dominion and therefore on the sameness of the physical substance of the ruling entity, which, by itself, has its own arrangement and organization as defined by the Greek word “economy.” Transposing this analogy to the situation of the Deity, the Son derives his substance from the substance of the Father and does nothing without the Father’s will, because he received his power from the Father. In this way the divine monarchy (i.e., unity) is preserved. The same applies to the “third degree” (*tertium gradum*) because the third pneumatic being, the Holy Spirit (*Spiritus*), proceeded from the Father through the Son.

Tertullian now tries to prove his assertion by quoting the scripture, though in his interpretation of the scripture he twists its meaning. He quotes 1 Corinthians 15:24–28 concerning the overcoming of the “enemies” of the Messiah by God when the Messianic Kingdom comes under the rule of the earthly Messiah. In the end, however, God will take over and restore the immortality of the (resurrected) people. In the Tertullian interpretation, this quotation refers to the “arrangement and dispensation” (*dispositionem et dispensationem*) of the Trinity. Similarly, the quoted Psalm 109 (110):1 expresses the idea of the restoration of the rule of God under the rule of the earthly Messiah. These quotes do not support the inference of the Trinity as Tertullian thinks. However, Tertullian, though wrongly interpreting the scriptural texts, concludes that the Father and the Son are separate individuals not only because they have separate names but also because the one who delivers up the kingdom and the one to whom the kingdom is delivered must of necessity be different individuals.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., IV.4.

Tertullian and the Son of God

Tertullian developed his doctrine of the Trinity almost incidentally on the occasion of a polemic with Praxeas, a monarchian and his contemporary religious writer. Once Jesus was considered a deity, and therefore Son of God and a human being in the Greek sense, the problem arose in maintaining the relative monotheism inherited from the Jews. Jews were not monotheists in the absolute sense because they recognized the existence of other national deities belonging to other ethnic groups. The evolution of the Christian Logos doctrine emphasized the personal character of the deity; therefore, the act of emanation was a voluntary act on the part of God. Tertullian started in his earlier writings with Logos Christology identifying Jesus with the Logos of Numenius and Greek Stoic philosophy emphasizing his unity of substance with God using the metaphor of “a ray of the sun.” Thus, Christ/Logos/Son becomes the second “in manner of existence” not in nature. Prolation of the Logos took place for the creation of the world as a necessary mediator to perform the work that God could not perform. Moreover, this Logos was the light generated in Genesis and interpreted in a metaphysical and ontological sense. This was in accordance with Greek and Egyptian theological doctrine. Also, the Logos/Son “was not the entire substance but a derivation and portion of the whole.” The prolated Logos/Son is a temporary being who is dependent on the will of God and who, after accomplishing his mission, returns to the divine substance.

The innovation that Tertullian introduced to the Christian triadic doctrine was the relative unity of substance. Using the baptismal formula as a starting point, Tertullian designated three persons and prolations with specific names in one God who is the common substance as a mode of existence and his economy or internal organization. Tertullian never defined what he meant by the term “person.” We must understand this term as a depiction of a distinct divine individual with a distinct quality and function. The substance is the unifying element in the deity, whereas the person is the differentiating characteristic in the life of God. But, if so, then there is no real division in the Godhead – only

a purely relative modal distinction. His doctrine seems to be a verbal device to reconcile a popular triadic interpretation of the terms found in the New Testament and in the baptismal formula with a requirement of the oneness of God. Moreover, Tertullian also developed a concept of the prolation of the Holy Spirit from the Son, as the Son is a prolation from the Father.

Tertullian's concept of a trinitarian God was developed from the analysis of four general Stoic logical categories: substrates or substances of everything that exists; qualities; the modes of existence or dispositions; and the relative modes of dispositions of existence. Tertullian using these Stoic categories transposes the logical relationship between objects onto the metaphysical existence of the divine Father and his Son, and also on the third entity – the Holy Spirit. The divine Father and the divine Son have their existence conditioned by their disposition only. They are not identical; moreover, the Father makes a Son and the Son makes a Father by logical relationship, that is, relative disposition.

GENERATION AND THE NATURE OF THE SON OF GOD

Because monarchianism claims that “the two are one” and that the Father is the same as the Son, Tertullian proposes to examine the question of whether the Son exists and, if so, who he is and what is his mode of existence.¹ Tertullian dismisses the claim that the scripture begins with the sentence “in the beginning God made for himself a Son” as groundless. But he derives another argument from God's own dispensation (*dispensatio*), which states that God existed alone before the creation of the world and up to the generation of the Son, being for himself the universe, space (*locus*), and all things. Tertullian claims that God was alone because there was nothing external to him. But even then God was not really “alone” because he possessed in himself (*in semetipso*) his own Reason (*rationem suam*). This Reason is his consciousness (*sensus*), which the Greeks call Logos and Christians call in Latin *Sermo* (Word), and hence they say that “the Word was in the beginning with God.” It would be more suitable to say that Reason (*ratio*) was more ancient than Word (*sermo*). God had Reason even before the beginning, and because Word consists of Reason, it proves its prior existence and substance. Thus, before the formation of the world, God had his Word in his Reason within himself. Such a speculation was promoted by Philo of Alexandria, who made the Platonic Ideas the internal thoughts of God.

God, by planning and occupying himself with what was to be uttered through the word, was causing the Word to become. To understand this, Tertullian uses the analogy of the human process of thinking. Since a human being is a rational animal not only because he is made by a rational artificer but also because he is actually animated by God's substance, a human in the process of thinking uses

¹ *Adversus Praxean* V.1.

words. Whatever we think (*cogitaveris*) is a word, and whatever we conceive (*senseris*) is reason. We think in words and become aware by reason. We speak in our mind, and the speech becomes an interlocutor (*conlocutor*). So in a sense, within a human there is a word through which one utters thinking, and this word is someone else (*alius est*), another individual. If we can make such an analogy for ourselves, the more so can we do it for God, whose image and likeness we are.

Tertullian summarizes his reasoning. First he claims that before the formation of the universe God was not alone because he had within himself Reason (*rationem*) and in Reason (*in ratione*) the Word (*sermonem*), which he made secondary to himself by agitating it (thinking) within himself. Next Tertullian claims that this God's disposition of power (*uis*) and consciousness (*sensus*) is represented in the Old Testament by the term Wisdom (*sophia*), which describes God's Reason and Word. And the quotations from the scripture (Prov. 8:22–31) are supposed to prove that God constituted Wisdom as his second person (*secundam personam*) first before he put things into their respective substances and forms, putting forth the Word itself, having within himself in his mind (*sensu*) their individualities (*individualitas*). According to Tertullian, God made all things already in his mind, just as Philo of Alexandria visualized Plato's Ideas present in the mind of God and representing the prototypes of things in the universe.

From such speculations later Christians came up with the concept of preexistence of or eternal generation of the Son because he existed within the consciousness of the deity as his reason (or wisdom). This concept of the preexistence of the Son was ascribed to Tertullian by Bishop George Bull (1674–1710),² who was probably the most prominent scholar of the history of the doctrine of the Trinity. Even Bull admits that Tertullian uses expressions at variance with Bull's own concept of the co-eternity of the pneumatic Christ-Son. For example, in *Adversus Hermogenem*,³ we find a passage in which Tertullian explicitly asserted that there was a time when the Son was not.

Though theologians were preoccupied with the eternal generation of the Son, the same type of reasoning applies to the generation of the universe. But by a peculiar twist the same theologians ignore the "eternal generation" of the universe that preexisted, according to Tertullian and Philo, in the mind of God as well. Obviously, Bull's insistence on the preexistence of the unbegotten Son has a psychological basis, in fear of diminishing otherwise the dignity and majesty of the Son's divinity. Because, according to the Christian theologians,

² George Bull, *Defensio Fidei Nicaenae*, in *The Works of George Bull, Lord Bishop of St. David's*, collected and revised by Rev. Edward Burton, to which is prefixed *The Life of Bishop Bull* by Rev. Robert Nelson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1846), vol. 5, parts (Tomes) 1 and 2, T. 2. III.10.1–24.234–250, pp. 635–683.

³ *Adversus Hermogenem* III.

the world is evil, they could not admit its being coeternal with God, even in this sense of preexistence as existing in his mind.⁴

Tertullian is explicit when he says that when God said, “Fiat lux” (Let there be light), the Word assumed its own form (*species*) and garb (*ornamentum*) – becoming light – and God made in this way himself a Son who proceeded from him as his firstborn (*primogenitus*) and the only-begotten. The Son is the only-begotten because he is peculiar to God as he is generated from God’s substance.

Tertullian finds proof of this in the scripture, misinterpreting Proverbs 8:22, Psalm 44 (45):2, Psalm 2:7, and Psalm 109 (110):3, as referring to the generation of the spiritual (pneumatic) Son, the divine being. Proverbs 8:22 is a poetical glorification of wisdom, though divine in quality, but partaken by humans in the context of the whole text, and its almost individualization is hardly any reference to a separate divine being. Psalm 44 (45):2 is an elocution of the writer in the dedication of the Psalm to glorify the king of Israel, “God’s anointed” (Hebrew *messiah* = Greek *christos*; Ps. 2:2). The author says that his “heart has emitted [*eructavit*] excellent word [*sermonem*].” In Psalm 2:7 the author puts in the mouth of God the words addressed to the king as the Messiah or *christos*: “Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten Thee” (i.e., I anointed you the king). This expression is paraphrased in the synoptic Gospels (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) in the formula of the baptism of Jesus, but its full text was used in the *Gospel of Ebionites*.⁵ Moreover, the gospel texts refer to the earthly Jesus who is supposed to become at the moment of his baptism the son of God (in the Hebrew meaning of the term). Tertullian’s claim refers to the generation of the spiritual (pneumatic) Son before the formation of the universe. In Psalm 109 (110):3, God addresses his anointed, the king of Israel, in poetical terms: “I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning.” In the entire Old Testament there is not a single expression that could be construed as referring to the future divine being, a divine pneumatic Messiah. Any mention of the Messiah, or in the Septuagint of the christ (*christos*), refers to the earthly king, prophet, or priest (sometimes even to the foreign ruler). They are also often addressed as the lord, but Old Testament scripture differentiates clearly between the divine Lord and the earthly lord. There are two different Hebrew terms that are translated as lord (*Kyrios* in the Septuagint): the term *Adonay* means the Lord God, whereas the term *Adoni* means the lord, master (human). Whenever Tertullian saw the term *christos* in the Septuagint, he interpreted it as referring to the pneumatic being, the Son of God, the Christ.

And again, making reference to Proverbs 8:24–25, Tertullian claims that the Son is speaking under the name of Wisdom. Combining these expressions with the text of Psalm 32:6, which refers to the expressions of Genesis 1 where God

⁴ Ibid., XVIII.

⁵ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.13.7–8.

speaks (*puts out his words*), Tertullian claims that the Word was spoken under the name of Wisdom, Reason, and divine Mind (*divinus animus*), and Spirit is nothing else but what the Son of God (*Filius Dei*) generated (*generatus*) when he proceeded (*prodeundo*) from God.

Tertullian explains also that the Word is a certain substance constructed from the Spirit (*spiritus*), Wisdom (*sophia*), and Reason (*ratio*, called by the Greeks *logos*), which “became also the Son of God, and was begotten when he proceeded forth from him.” It is a substantive being, a thing and a person (*res et persona*) constituted as second to God (*secundus a Deo*) to make two individuals, the Father and the Son, God and the Word.⁶ Next, accepting the old principle of Parmenides that “nothing can be made out of nothing” and that which is incorporeal cannot make things that have bodies (referring to Jn. 1:1; Exod. 20:7; Phil. 2:6), Tertullian claims that God is corporeal: “For who will deny that God is a body [*Deum corpus esse*], although ‘God is a Spirit.’ For Spirit has a bodily substance of its own kind, in its own form.”⁷ Therefore, how much more must that which has been sent forth from God’s substance be substance; and whatever the substance of the Word which he designates as a person is the Son and thus second to the Father (*secundum a Patre*).

Bishop Bull’s argument for the preexistence of the Word is as follows. First, everything that has an origin has a “parent” and everything that derived from the origin is “progeny.” By the same token, one who may be generated (born) from a father is always in the father, though not always born, thus the father may not always be a father.⁸ The second argument⁹ refers to the famous Tertullian statement in *Against Hermogenes* that “there was a time when the Son of God was not” (*Fuisse tempus, quando Filius Dei non esset*). Bull, however, twists Tertullian’s testimony, quoting the opinion of Bellarmine, who said that it refers not to the Word of God but to “a holy man or an angel as adoptive son of God, that is, external to God.” Though Bull admits that it is not certain, he claims that another statement of Tertullian in the same treatise demonstrates that the Son was always in the Father. There, Tertullian making reference to the biblical statement about the generation of God’s Wisdom, emphasizes its origin and beginning by comparing it with the origin and beginning of things external to God, namely, material things. Tertullian wrote that God had within him a “counselor who knew things in God” and this was “his Wisdom” that is the Spirit. And further:

That very Wisdom of God is declared to be born and created, for the special reason that we should not suppose that there is any other being than God alone who is unbegotten and uncreated.¹⁰

⁶ *Adversus Praxean* VII.5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, VII.8.

⁸ Bull, *Defensio Fidei Nicaenae*, T.2, III. 8.7.2.222, p. 602.

⁹ *Ibid.*, T. 2 III.10.9.234, pp. 635–637.

¹⁰ *Adversus Hermogenem* XVIII.

(Tertullian refers here to material things because it is the topic of his argument with Hermogenes.) Apparently, Bull concluded that Tertullian believed that the Son of God, or Wisdom, or Reason, or Word, was always in God or with God as a person and was declared begotten only as a device to demonstrate that nothing extrinsic to God may be co-eternal with him. Bull wants to ascribe to Tertullian his own orthodox view of eternal generation of the Son and his procession from the Father when the Father wished.¹¹

But Tertullian is inconsistent in another respect. He declares in *Against Hermogenes* that the Wisdom of God is the Spirit in God, which was his counselor, and “Of this he made all things, making them through it, and making them with it.”¹² In *Against Praxeas*, Tertullian identifies this Wisdom of God with the Word of God, with the Power of God, and with the Son of God.¹³ These names are for him one and the same thing. At the same time, however, Tertullian declares that the Power of God and the Wisdom of God are not things or substances, but attributes:

Much more will the power of the Highest not be the Highest himself, because it is not an actually existing thing, as being Spirit – in the same way as the Wisdom of God and the Providence of God is not God: these attributes are not substances, but the accidents of the particular substance. Power is incidental to the Spirit; but cannot itself be the Spirit.¹⁴

THE MODE OF EXISTENCE OF THE DIVINE PROLATION (SON)

Now there was a problem for Tertullian in asserting the generation of the Son from the substance of the Father. In an attempt to oppose the doctrine of Valentinus¹⁵ about prolation (προβολή) of “Aeon from Aeon” (*Aeonem de Aeone*), which would lead to the formation of separate divine beings, thus to bitheism or tritheism, Tertullian proposes to use the term in a different meaning, not as a separate entity, but as an outgrowth united with the source.

The term Aeon (Αἰών), signifying “age,” “the ever-existing,” or “eternity,” was applied by Gnostics to designate the series of spiritual powers progressively emanating from the eternal Being and personified. They constitute the Pleroma (Πλήρωμα) or invisible spiritual world and intermediaries between the divinity and the Kenoma (Κένωμα), or visible material world. This concept of the Aeon originated in Platonic philosophy, which postulated that a transcendent divinity was incapable of any interaction with the material world. Gnostics attempted to reconcile this philosophy with the Christian notion of a direct interference

¹¹ Bull, *Defensio Fidei Nicaenae*, T.2. III.10.5.236–237, p. 643.

¹² *Adversus Hermogenem* XVIII.

¹³ *Adversus Praxean* XIX.3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XXVI.6–7.

¹⁵ Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Centuries*, translated by Michael Steinhauser, edited by Marshall D. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

of God with the material world, in the creation and redemption of man. These Aeons were functional in the Hellenic religious systems, whereas in Judaism the function of Aeons was performed by angels. In different Gnostic systems there was a hierarchy of Aeons emanating, as in Egyptian religious systems, in pairs, from a starting point, which was a divinity with an accompanying co-eternal Aeon. In Christian Gnosticism, Christ was an Aeon whose function was to restore harmony in the Pleroma and bring order in the material world by giving men knowledge that will free them from the dominion of evil.

Tertullian's proofs come from comparing the characteristics ascribed to the Aeons and to the Son, namely, that Aeon "does not know the Father ... he longs to know him, but cannot"; moreover, this is so because "he is swallowed up and dissolved in the rest of matter [substance]." The Son, on the contrary,¹⁶ "alone knows the Father ... has unfolded the Father's bosom" (Jn. 1:18); "has heard and seen all things with the Father"; he speaks "what he had been commanded by the Father" and "is not in his own will but the Father's, which he has accomplished" and "which he had known from the beginning." Therefore, the Word as formed from the Spirit (the Spirit is the body of the Word) is both always in the Father and always with God. This is Tertullian's interpretation of the scriptural expressions found in John 14:11 and 1:1. And they are supposed to indicate that the Son is "never separated from the Father and other than the Father," again supposedly supporting the scriptural text (Jn. 10:30). Tertullian still insists on using the term prolation, because this meaning is found in the scripture "God sent forth the Word," but Tertullian understands it as the outgrowth remaining united with its source.

That it is so is indicated by his explanations. Tertullian uses the following analogies to explain this unity between the Father and the Son: "just as the root put forth the tree, and the fountain the river, and the sun the ray." These are the prolations of the substances from which they proceed, but they are not severed from the source. Thus, the Son and the Father are two things but indivisible. In summing up this speculation, Tertullian abruptly introduces, without explanation, the third individual in unity with the other two:

Everything which proceeds from something else must needs be second to that from which it proceeds, without being on that account separated. Where, however, there is a second there must be two; and where there is a third, there must be three. Now the Spirit is the third from God and the Son; just as the fruit of the tree is third from the root, or as the stream out of the river is third from the fountain, or as the apex of the ray is third from the sun. Nothing, however, is alien from that original source whence it derives its own properties. In like manner the Trinity flowing down from the Father through intertwined and connected steps, does not at all disturb the Monarchy [*monarchiae*], whilst it at the same time guards the state of the economy [*oikonomiae statum protegit*].¹⁷

¹⁶ Matt. 11:27; Jn. 14:31; 6:38; I Cor. 2:11.8.

¹⁷ *Adversus Praxean* VIII.

Tertullian's illustrations taken from the analogies to the natural world are used as a *sui generis* proof for his assertions about the Trinity. From this analogy Tertullian derived his assertion about the origin of the third entity from the second. We do not find this concept in the Apologists; they rather tacitly assumed its origin as being analogical to the origin of the second entity.

Tertullian professes the rule of faith (*regula fidei*): the three are inseparable; each is one – the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (as having the same substance, i.e., *pneuma* or spirit); yet they are distinct from each other. So to describe the mode of their existence, Tertullian opposes the mode of existence as a separated individual to that of distinction with the unity: the Son differs from the Father not by diversity (*diuersitate*) but by distribution (*distributione*), not by division (*diuisione*) but by distinction (*distinctione*). This is supposed to be so because it relates to the economy (*oikonomia*) or the internal structure of the divine being: the Father is the whole substance (*tota substantia*), the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole (*deriuatio totius et portio*). The proof is supposed to come from the statement of John 14:28 in which the superior status of the Father is mentioned. But Tertullian interprets it in quantitative terms of the quantity of substance. Another quote supposedly supporting Tertullian's contention is to come from Psalm 8:6, where the expression refers to the human being as being lower in status to the angels. In the same passage there also is man described characteristically and simply as “the Son of man,” a typical description of Jesus by himself. Because the Son was sent by the Father, Tertullian reasoned, the Son must be distinct from the Father, but again Tertullian argues that John 14:16 is supposed to indicate also the person of the Paraclete as the separate disposition (*dispositionem*), not a division (*diuisionem*). But in this quote Jesus states that he will pray to the Father and the Father will send another comforter (*allium aduocatum*), and there is no indication of any “disposition” here; John indicates only the spirit of truth (*spiritum ueritatis*) as the effect or influence of God. Tertullian interprets this expression as pointing to a distinct individual from the Father, distinct as the Son is distinct. The Son has the second-degree (*secundum gradum*) and the Spirit has the third-degree (*tertium gradum*) order of structure (*oikonomiam*). Again, Tertullian gives a fancy argument in support of this contention: it must be so because the Father and the Son have different names.

SUPPOSED SCRIPTURAL TESTIMONY FOR
THE EXISTENCE OF THE SON

Moreover, to be a father one needs have a son and vice-versa. From such an argument, Tertullian derives the necessity of the Father to have the Son.¹⁸ And as if in order to refute the argument of irrationality of the concept of God having

¹⁸ Ibid., IX–XXV.

a son, Tertullian quotes as arguments a few statements from various scriptures with the meaning that everything is possible with God (Job 42:2; Matt. 19:26; Luke 18:27; 1 Cor. 1:26–28). We should not ask, according to Tertullian, what God could do, but rather “what God really has done.” “For with God, to be willing is to be able, and to be unwilling is to be unable; all that he has willed, however, he has both been able to accomplish, and has displayed his ability. Since, therefore, if God had wished to make himself a Son, he had it in his power to do so; and since, if he had it in his power, he affected his purpose.”

Now what remains to be proved for Tertullian is that God actually did so. He proceeds to demonstrate from selected statements from the scripture and interpreted in his peculiar way that God made “his word a Son to himself.” The Son is distinct from the Father but is not separate (*distincte, inquam non diuise*) and, according to Tertullian, “All the scriptures attest the clear existence of, and distinction in the [Persons of] Trinity, and indeed furnish us with the Rule of faith.” In addition to the already discussed quotations from Psalm 44 (45):2, Psalm 2:7, and Psalm 109 (110):3, Tertullian cites the prophecy of Isaiah 42:1, which refers to the Jewish king, the servant of God who will receive the spirit from God (i.e., God’s guidance and instruction, in the Hebrew way) and who “will teach the true way to the nations.”¹⁹ In the text of Isaiah 49:6, God promises to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the survivors of Israel (after defeat) and make them the light for the nations, “that his salvation may reach the end of the earth.” This was clearly a political promise to the Jews, who were first to be restored in their idealized kingdom and then to become the rulers of the world. Isaiah 61:1 refers, even in the distorted Latin translation used by Tertullian, to the Jewish king or head of state who is God’s anointed according to the Jewish tradition, and who has a mandate to “proclaim good news,” that is, the release from captivity, consolation, and vindication by God of Israel’s mourners after their disasters. In Psalm 70 (71):18 the Son is supposed to speak of himself “Forsake me not until I have declared the might of Thine arm [i.e., God’s arm] to all the generation that is to come.” If so, this is the prophecy that was not fulfilled. But this prophecy refers to David, the Jewish king. In Psalm 3:2 God declares that he selected the people of Israel to account for all their iniquities.

According to Tertullian, all the psalms that prophesy the person of the “anointed” (*christus = christos*) represent the pneumatic Son, and the pneumatic Christ as speaking with the Father represents Christ as speaking to God. Also, the Holy Spirit is represented in the psalms as the third Person when he is supposedly speaking of the Father and the Son: “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou on my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” (Ps. 109 [110]:1). In this Psalm, the author speaks about his lord, King David

¹⁹ Isaiah 42:1, in *Sacred Writings*, vol. 1, *Judaism: The Tanakh*, New Jewish Publications Society Translation (New York: Book-of-the-Month Club, 1985, 1992).

(second lord), to whom God (the first Lord) offers privileges and support in conquering the enemies. Tertullian evidently takes the author of the Psalm as the Holy Spirit, but is not consistent; moreover, how can the Son be the Lord of the Holy Spirit? The same suggestion is made for Isaiah 45:1. But here clearly God speaks to King Cyrus, who was considered God's anointed, that is in Hebrew *messiah* and in Greek *christos*. Isaiah 53:1–2 refers to the idealized Jewish Messiah, God's anointed who will grow from obscurity and suffering to glory and upon whom God will visit the guilt of all Jews. This text was used in creating the figure of Jesus in the Gospels and now Tertullian refers back to it to prove the existence of the Son.

Tertullian summarizes his speculation claiming that all these quotes indicate the existence of the Trinity:

For there is the Spirit himself who speaks, and the Father to whom he speaks, and the Son of whom he speaks. In the same manner, the other passages also establish each one of several persons in his special character – addressed as if they in some cases are to the Father or to the Son in respect to the Son, or in other cases to the Son or to the Father concerning the Father, and again in other instances to the [Holy] Spirit.²⁰

Further evidence for the existence of the Trinity Tertullian attempts to provide by other scriptural quotes. God for example, being one, speaks in plural phrases, as in Genesis 1:26; 3:22. Tertullian gives this explanation:

Nay, it was because he [God] had already his Son close to his side, as a second Person, his own Word, and a third Person also, the Spirit in the Word, that he purposely adopted the plural phrase, "Let us make"; and, "in our image"; and, "become as one of us."

This Son was one day to put on a human nature (*induiturus humanitatem*), and the Spirit was to sanctify man (*sanctificaturus*). Thus, the text of Genesis 1:27 Tertullian interprets as referring to man made in the image of the Son-Christ, the perfect man, who was to become a man.

Another argument for the Trinity comes, according to Tertullian, from what God did before the world came into existence. He quotes familiar statements from Genesis, "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). Now in Tertullian's interpretation, produced by a peculiar juxtaposition of a quote from John 1:9, it is supposed to mean that the Word appeared immediately and that it is supposed to be "that true light, which lighteth man on his coming into the world." So, the Light of Genesis is supposed to be the Word, the Son. Also, making reference to John 1:1, which states (in most translations) that "The Word was God" (*Deus erat sermo*), and John 1:3, which states that everything that was made was made through it, Tertullian attempts to explain that subsequent acts of God's creation were done in two steps by two individuals – in one step one individual commands the things to be made, and

²⁰ *Adversus Praxean* XI.10.

in another the other individual executes the order and creates (God did this or that). The evidence for this is supposed to come from the fact that the first God issues commands such as “God said: ‘Let there be firmament’” and so on, and the second God does things. God would not issue a command if he were alone; therefore, there are two divine individuals. And again the distinction between these two is not on the basis of their substance but on the basis of their personality (i.e., function). If we put aside the question that the text of Genesis is a poetical and metaphorical one, there are statements that are not consistent in their formulations with the speculation of Tertullian. For example, Genesis 1:1, 2:4–17, and 2:21–22 clearly state what Yahweh himself did without issuing a command.

Many passages according to Tertullian illustrate the plurality of persons in God and the unity of substance. Psalm 44 (45):7–8 Tertullian erroneously interprets as if the scribe referred to the Christ, anointed God, by God, whereas the text clearly refers to the righteous king who is the anointed (*messiah, christos*) of God. Another text of Isaiah, 45:14–15, used by Tertullian is supposed to speak of Christ and the Holy Spirit, whereas it refers to the king and Israel, and promises that he will be victorious because only he and his followers worship the true God, that is, the God of Israel, who, in addition, was hidden (probably with the meaning “not revealed to other nations”). The text even in the wrong translation refers to the God of Israel and not to two or three divine individuals.

Again, in the Tertullian interpretation of John 1:1, there were two divine individuals: one who was God and the other who was with him, the Word. In Psalm 109 (110):1 and Isaiah 53:1, Tertullian claims that both these individuals are called Lord (i.e., God), whereas the texts refer to the Lord God and the lord king. In Genesis 19:24, the term lord is repeated twice, which Tertullian again takes as meaning that the first term lord refers to the Christ, the Son. Then Tertullian apologizes for the kind of Christians who follow the Paraclete and believe that the scripture positively declared two Gods and two Lords, and, with the introduction of the Holy Spirit, even three. This was done in accordance with the divine economy, so that when Christ came he might be acknowledged both as God and as Lord and to avoid having the Father come down to earth and sacrifice himself. At the same time, the scripture declares that there is one God and one Lord; thus the Three must be restored to unity in contradistinction to the polytheism of the Gentiles. And, in order to distinguish between the two, the Father and the Son, Tertullian says that, when both are invoked, he will call the Father “God” and Jesus “Lord,” and when Christ alone is mentioned he will call him “God.” It is interesting that Tertullian, to justify this statement, invokes the analogy of the sun and the sun ray:

For I should give the name “sun” even to a sunbeam, considered in itself; but if I were mentioning the sun from which the ray emanates, I certainly should at once withdraw the name “sun” from the mere beam. For although I make not two suns, still I shall

reckon both the sun and its ray to be as much two things [*duas res*] and two forms [*duas species*] of one undivided substance [*unius et indivisae substantiae*], as God and his Word [*sermonem*], as the Father and the Son.

Another argument used by Tertullian to prove the existence of the Son is from the invisibility of God the Father but the visibility of the Son. God, according to Exodus 33:20, is invisible, but many saw God according to the faculties of man – Abraham, Jacob, the prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel) – and did not die. Therefore, they had to see another being that is the Son, who can be seen because of the derivation of his mode of existence, just as we cannot look at the sun in the heavens to contemplate it in its full substance but endure only a ray with our eyes.²¹ But the Son himself, being a God and spirit, is invisible; nevertheless, he appeared as visible to the prophets and patriarchs before his incarnation in a vision, in an image, in a glass, and as an enigma and spoke to them (Gen. 32:20; Exod. 33:9, 11, 14, 19–28; Num. 12:6, 8; 1 Cor. 13:12). Tertullian calls the invisible Father “his face” on the basis of a wrong translation and reading of John 14:28 and Lamentations 4:20 (*Spiritus personae eius Christus Dominus*), that the Father must be greater than the Son, which is an erroneous interpretation of the Hebrew text referring to the king of Judah (probably the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, anointed of Yahweh [*christus Domini*] and who was captured in 587 B.C.E. by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon). Whenever he sees the term “anointed” (*christus*), Tertullian applies it to the pneumatic being, Christ, the Son, or the Word. When the texts are read with Tertullian’s meaning of the term, they lead to nonsense.

Next Tertullian contrasts the Son’s visibility with the Father’s invisibility in the New Testament. Again, as the basis for the contrast Tertullian takes the quote from Exodus 33:20 which implies that man cannot see God as he would die. Such a theme is repeated in John 1:18 and 1 Timothy 6:16. The apostles, however, saw God, therefore they saw the Son (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Jn. 1:1; 4:12; Jn. 1:14, 18). Tertullian claims that John in Romans 9:5 “shows us also that the Son of God, which is the Word of God, is visible, because he who became flesh was called Christ.” Time was when the Son was visible in mystery and an enigma. He became more visible in his incarnation, and he is God because he is God from God (*Dei Deum*). The last statement is a paradigm of Greek philosophy (*similis simili gaudet*). Following the same line of thought Tertullian lists characteristics ascribed to the Father: he is immortal and dwells in invisible and unapproachable light. He contrasts them with those of the Son: mortality, visibility, accessibility by means of the light, which was accessible without harm, loss of reason and mind (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; Acts 9:8; Matt. 17:5–6). But such speculation is not consistent with Tertullian’s further description of the Son as having two natures – divine and human.²² From such comparisons

²¹ Ibid., XIV,3.

²² Ibid., XI.12; XXVII.11, 14.

Tertullian concludes that there are two: one, the Son, who was always seen from the beginning and became visible in the end; and the other, the Father, who was not visible from the beginning and was not seen in the end. But in the final analysis the Son has always worked by the authority and will of the Father because, according to John 5:19, “the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing.” Further, Tertullian explains that the term “do” means “in his mind and thought. For the Father acts by mind and thought; whilst the Son, who is in the Father’s mind and thought, gives effect and form to what he sees. Thus all things were made by the Son, and without him was not anything made.”

Next Tertullian, following the approach of Justin and other Apologists, reviews all the manifestations of the Son of God as recorded, according to him, in the Old Testament and considers them as a practice or rehearsal for the subsequent incarnation. As a basis for this contention, Tertullian gives the quotation from John 3:35, which indicates that God handed to the Son the order not only of the creation of the world but also of everything else already done by God (Jn. 1:1; Matt. 28:18). Next follows the review, the same as that given by Justin of the Son’s manifestations and actions. This was done “in order to level for us the way of the faith, that we might the more readily believe that the Son of God had come down into the world.”²³ But Tertullian states that in the final analysis all things were done by the Father through the agency of the Son.²⁴

In the following chapters, Tertullian undertakes the task of proving that Praxeas is wrong in identifying the Father with the Son. Tertullian claims that they are two distinct persons but not separated because the scripture says *Ego Deus et alius praeter me non est* (Isa. 45:5). So in the Gospel of John Jesus answers to Philip *Ego et Pater unum sumus* (Jn. 10:30), and *Qui me viderit, uidit et Patrem* (Jn. 14:9), and also, *Ego in Patre et Pater in me* (Jn. 14:10–11; 10:38). These were the key quotes of Jesus on which monarchians based their argument. Tertullian accuses the monarchians of selecting these few testimonies and ignoring the rest of the scripture, so he proposes to examine them in chapters XXI–XXV in the light of the other statements in the Gospel of John.

One of Tertullian’s arguments follows from the preamble to the Gospel of John (1:1–3). Tertullian interprets this passage as showing what Jesus was before he became flesh and that originally there were two, namely, the Word of God and God, but the Word was also God and, according to Tertullian, regarded as the Son of God, not as the Father. Moreover, the Word was there in the beginning because it was spoken by God and there was no world formed yet. According to Tertullian, this *sermo* is not identical with God, but

²³ Ibid., XVI.3.

²⁴ Ibid., XVI.7.

is differentiated by dispensation (i.e., arrangement, or distribution of God's powers) and not by separation. Thus, the one who "became flesh" (and it was the *sermo* who became flesh) is not the same as the one from whom the Word came. And glory was awarded to him analogically as to the only-begotten of the Father and not as to the Father because nobody saw God and only his Son divulged the Father's innermost thoughts. Further proof of the distinction comes from the affirmation of Jesus as the Son of God given by John the Baptist (Jn. 1:29–34) and Nathanael (Jn. 1:49–51). Peter (Matt. 16:16–17) affirmed that Jesus is the anointed (*messiah* = *christos* = Christ), the Son of God on earth (but it could be only in the Hebrew meaning). Then Tertullian quotes passages from the scripture in which the Son, that is, Jesus, is differentiated from the Father as evidence for the existence of two divine entities (Jn. 2:16; 3:16–18, 35–36; 4:25, 34; 5:17, 18, 20, 43; 6:29, 32–44, 69; 7:15–16, 28, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 42, 48–49, 54–56; 11:27; 12:28, 44–45; 13:1–3; Matt. 17:5). Jesus preaches what he "heard" from the one who has sent him (Jn. 8:26–29, 38; 12:49) and that he has certain powers given to him by his Father, but none of his own, even the power of judging during the approaching general resurrection and trial, just as the Jewish Messiah was supposed to do (Jn. 5:19–27, 35–37; 10:24–25). Jesus claims that he is a man (Jn. 8:40) though sent by God. On the one hand, Tertullian takes literally the expression *Ego enim ex Deo exiui et ueni* (Jn. 8:42) as meaning that the Son of God (in Tertullian nomenclature, Christ) is coming out of God "like the ray's procession from the sun and the river's from the fountain, and the tree's from the seed." On the other hand, he interprets it as meaning that they are not separated. To Tertullian, Jesus is the Son of man according to his flesh, also the Son of God according to his Spirit.²⁵ To Tertullian,²⁶ God is in a "bottomless abyss, but exists everywhere by his power and authority," as does his Son, who is indivisible from the Father. But in his economy or dispensation the Father wanted to have the Son on earth, being himself in heaven.²⁷ And he made his Son a little lower than the angels²⁸ by sending him to earth, though he will take him back to heaven and glory. Moreover, Tertullian believes that it was the Son who was seen and heard in the past scriptural testimonies and not the Father. "It was therefore always the Son under the designation of the Almighty and the Most High, and King, and Lord."

Now coming back to the crucial statement of Jesus "I and my Father are one" (Jn. 10:30), Tertullian explains first that the pronouncement of Jesus clearly involves two individuals, *ego* and *Pater*. Second, the verb *sumus* indicates the plural form that is inapplicable to one person. Lastly, the term *unum sumus*

²⁵ Ibid., XI.12.

²⁶ Ps. 138 (139):8.

²⁷ Ps. 102 (103):19; Isaiah 66:1.

²⁸ Ps. 8:5–6. Hebrew text says "God," but LXX "angels."

and not *unus sumus* is used. *Unum* is used here which is a neutral singular word and does not point to singularity in number but to unity, likeness, conjunction, affection of the Father who loves the Son, submission of the Son who obeys the Father's will. *Unum sumus* signifies equality and unity. Jews hearing such blasphemy wanted to stone Jesus but he reminds them of the many good works he had performed, which derive from the Father. The Jews replied that they did not want to stone him for deeds but for blasphemy. To prevent their thinking of Jesus as deserving the stoning as if he had claimed to be himself God, Jesus appeals to the authority of the scripture. For if the scripture addresses the leaders of the Jews as "I said, you are gods,"²⁹ and the statement is metaphorical, so much less one can say about him who was sanctified and sent into the world by the Father (i.e., as anointed by God), that he blasphemes because he said "I am the son of God." And as evidence of his truthfulness, Jesus points to his works, which indicate that he is in the Father and the Father is in him (Jn. 10:31–39). Tertullian explains that precisely through the works the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father, and thus in this way we must understand their unity. Still Tertullian believes that though they were of one power (nature) (*in una uirtute*) they should be believed to be two; otherwise, one could not believe in the Son. Moreover, Tertullian believes that Jesus (the Son) was described in the Old Testament as the anointed (*christos = messiah*) of God, but in the New Testament he is the Son of God and thus anciently predicted. He is also declared as such and glorified by the Father himself from heaven in the statement "This is my beloved Son"³⁰ and, as such, is believed by his disciples and rejected by the other Jews. And then Tertullian gives other quotes that indicate the origin of Jesus from the Father and his mission on earth in order to show the way to the Father (Jn. 5:25–26; 6:44; 14:6, 7, 10, 11; Matt. 11:27).

All this indicates, according to Tertullian that, through the agency of the Son, the Father could be seen in his works and recognized, though he himself is invisible as the Law attested:

He [the Father] only becomes visible in the Son from his mighty works, and not in the manifestation of His person.³¹

But, at the same time, Jesus sets the conjunction of the two persons in order that one might not see the Father as "separately visible." The Father is manifested through the works of Jesus but "not indeed to the sight of man, but to his intelligence."³²

²⁹ In Psalm 81 (82):6 the judges of Israel are addressed: "I had taken you for the divine beings, sons of the Most High, all of you."

³⁰ Matt. 17:5; Jn. 12:28.

³¹ *Adversus Praxean* XXIV.5.

³² *Ibid.*, XXIV.8.

THE THIRD PERSON IN THE TRINITY

In chapter 25,³³ Tertullian attempts to analyze what the Gospels say about the third entity, the Paraclete or the Holy Spirit. There is a statement (Jn. 14:16) in which Jesus promises to ask the Father, after his ascension, to send to earth another Comforter (*Paracletus*). Tertullian insinuates that the Paraclete is “another” entity different from the Father as is the Son. But since Jesus said of the Paraclete “He shall receive of mine” (Jn. 16:14) just as he himself received from the Father, the connection of the Father in the Son and the Son in the Paraclete produces three individuals who are distinct from one another. By analogy to John 10:30, these three are one and not one person; moreover, by analogy to the second person and by extension of its characteristics, their unity is the unity of substance and not singularity of number. And again Tertullian quotes the scripture to indicate that the Father is distinct from the Son (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34; Luke 23:46) even after the resurrection because he will ascend to his Father and God, and the Father and God of his disciples (Jn. 20:17), thus demonstrating that “Jesus is the Christ (the Anointed), the Son of God.” The Gospels, however, use the term Christ as the Greek equivalent of the messiah or the “anointed,” the earthly Son of God, though he may be elevated to a higher dignity, and not the celestial pneumatic being as Tertullian understands the term.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was not developed in the second century. The theological statements of the Spirit in the second century did not use the term hypostasis or person; but the term Holy Spirit was most certainly considered a third entity of the triad in the popular religion of the Christian Gentiles. The concept was an *enfant terrible* of the Christian faith. For Christian theorists, this term was spoiling the harmony of the duality, and only, as Novatian states, the authority of faith (i.e., from the testimony of scripture) compelled them to believe in the Holy Spirit as the third individual. But at the same time, Novatian seems to understand the Holy Spirit not as a substantive being but as an influence or effect of God’s action. Thus, he claims that the Spirit dwelt in Christ.³⁴ In such an understanding, we find remnants of the Hebrew concept of the *ruach* as the effect and function of God who is considered the Father. The trinitarian concept at its root can be considered a representation of the functional description of the divinity.³⁵ Tertullian himself is very equivocal about the third person of the Trinity describing him also as the *Spiritus in sermone*.³⁶ Nevertheless, Tertullian was the first to call the Holy Spirit God explicitly in a theological treatise, but it seems that he only repeated what was probably religious folklore in the Greek environment.

³³ Ibid., XXV.

³⁴ Novatian, *De Trinitate* XXIX.

³⁵ James W. McClendon, “Some Reflections on the Future of Trinitarianism,” *Review and Expositor* 63, no. 2 (1966): 149–156.

³⁶ *Adversus Praxean* XII.3.

Tertullian, under the influence of the Logos speculation, was the first to conceive the Spirit as a prolation from the Son as the Son is from the Father, and therefore subordinate to the Son as the Son is to the Father. This is the most characteristic trait of his doctrine. Still Tertullian preserves the conception of the Father as the ultimate source in his assertion that the Spirit, being the third degree in the Godhead, proceeds “from no other source than from the Father through the Son.”³⁷ The Father and the Son are represented by the root and the stem, the fountain and the river, the sun and its ray; so the Spirit, being “third from God and the Son,” is as the fruit of the tree, which is third from the root, or as the stream from the river, which is third from the fountain, or as the apex from the ray, which is third from the sun.³⁸ All flows from the Father through conjoined grades – the immediate connection is of the Father in the Son and the Son in the Paraclete.³⁹ It may be said that the Son receives the Spirit from the Father yet himself sends him forth: “the third name in the Godhead and the third Grade in the divine Majesty, the Declarer of the One Monarchy of God and yet, at the same time, the Interpreter of the Economy.”⁴⁰

There is not much Tertullian or any other Christian Apologist can say about the Holy Spirit. Because the name of the Paraclete or the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the scripture, Tertullian automatically assumes it to be an individual celestial pneumatic being analogical to the Word interpreted in a literal Greek sense as the Son of God. Thus, the Paraclete or the Holy Spirit is treated as the third individual in the Trinity, all three having the same substance, *sui generis* material – that is, the “spirit” (Gr. *pneuma*, Lat. *spiritus*).

THE SECOND GENERATION OF THE WORD AS THE SON OF GOD FROM BIRTH NARRATIONS

Next, Tertullian analyzes the verbal formulations of the announcement of Jesus’ birth in order to prove that the Father and the Son are distinct entities.⁴¹ In Luke 1:35 the announcement in the Latin version quoted by Tertullian says: *Spiritus Dei* [in the Greek version and in the Vulgate, it is the *Pneuma hagian* and *Spiritus Sanctus*, respectively = the Holy Spirit] *superueniet in te et uirtus Altissimi obumbrabit te; propterea quod nascetur ex te sanctum uocabitur Filius Dei* (The Spirit of God shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also the Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God).⁴² Tertullian argues that by saying that it was the “Spirit of God” and not simply God who came upon Mary, the author

³⁷ Ibid., IV.

³⁸ Ibid., VIII.

³⁹ Ibid., XXV.

⁴⁰ Ibid., XXX.

⁴¹ Ibid., XXVI.

⁴² Ibid., XXVI.2.

wanted to emphasize that only a portion of the whole Godhead entered her and became “the Son of God.” But, at the same time, the Spirit of God must be the same as the Word (*Sermo*) because John 1:14 said: *Sermo caro factus est* (The Word was made flesh). For Tertullian the Spirit is the substance of God and as such it must be the substance of the Word because the Word is the operation of the Spirit, and the two are one and the same.⁴³ But how Tertullian equated the operation (*Sermo*) with the substantive being (*substantiua res*) is not explained. This identity does not appear anywhere in the scripture, and we can only speculate that Tertullian followed the Greek paradigm that every operation or function must have its substantive agent. In the Hebrew mentality, *Davar*, the Word, was not a substantive being, but a power of God, thus his attribute. Only in the philosophy of Philo of Alexandria do we find an indication, though hesitant, of such a switch. Moreover, Tertullian himself insists that the “power of the Highest” (*uirtus Altissimi*) cannot be equated with the actually existing thing (*substantiua res*). Likewise, the Wisdom of God and Providence cannot be equated with God because they are not substances but attributes and, as such, accidents of the particular substance.⁴⁴ Further, Tertullian argues, and again in agreement with the Greek logical paradigm, that what proceeds from a personal subject may be in quality exactly as the subject from whom it proceeds and to whom it belongs. The Spirit and the Word are God, but they are not actually the very same as the source. The Word is so far God as it is of the same substance as God himself and as an actually existing being (*substantiua res*) and a portion of the Godhead. After a lengthy and convoluted speculation, Tertullian concludes that whatever it was that had been conferred on the virgin, the Spirit of God, the Word, and the Power – that which was born of her is the Son of God, the pneumatic Christ.⁴⁵ And, as such, Jesus was attested to in many places in the scripture (Luke 2:49; 4:34; 9:20–21; 10:11, 22; 12:8–9; 22:29; 23:46; 24:29–31; Mark 1:24; 11:31; 15:34; Matt. 4:3; 10:32–35; 11:25, 27; 16:16–17; 26:53; 28:19).

So we may conclude that what entered Mary by the power of God (the Most High) was the Spirit of God, that is, a portion of the substance of God; and Tertullian identifies it with the Word (*Sermo*) because it is said in the Gospel of John that “the Word became flesh.” What was born of Mary, Jesus, is the Son of God as it was announced by the angel. Jesus as the Son of God has several powers and duties to perform: “He will confess those who confess him and deny those who deny him, before his Father”; “He is ignorant of the last day and hour, which is known to the Father only”; “He awards the kingdom to his disciples” (by the appointment of his Father); “He has the power to ask ... legions of angels from the Father for his help”; “He exclaims

⁴³ Ibid., XXVI.4.

⁴⁴ Ibid., XXVI.7.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

that God has forsaken him”; “He commends his spirit into the hands of his Father”; “After his resurrection he promises in a pledge ... that he will send them the promise of his Father”; “He commands them [the disciples] to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, not in a unipersonal God.”⁴⁶

TWO NATURES IN THE SON: THE SON OF GOD AND THE SON OF MAN

After claiming to have established that there is distinction between the Father and the Son without destroying their union by making an analogy to the union of the sun and the ray, or of the fountain and the river, Tertullian now attempts to establish that there is a distinction between the two natures united in the Son. According to the monarchians, however, the difference between the Father and the Son is such that the Father is the Spirit, that is Christ, that is God; and the Son is the flesh, that is man, that is Jesus. Tertullian claims to have refuted this by stating that the Word of God is the Spirit of God, also called the Power of the Highest, that proceeded from God. Now he states that the Power is a substantive thing, contradicting what he said earlier.

To explain the nature of Jesus, Tertullian goes back to the announcement made by the angel in Luke 1:35. The holy thing that will be born of Mary should be called Jesus. The monarchians argue that it was the flesh, that is, the man Jesus, who was born; therefore, he must be the Son. Tertullian argues, contrary to the biblical text, that the announcement was spoken concerning the Spirit of God:

That, therefore, had to be born which was conceived and was to be brought forth; that is to say, the Spirit.

On the basis of Matthew 1:23, by mistaken reference to Isaiah 7:14, that he who was to be born was to be called Emmanuel, which is interpreted as meaning “God with us,” Tertullian puts together two announcements, one meaning he who was born is the Son of God, the other “God with us,” and takes them literally, in the Greek sense as meaning that the thing born is physically the Son of God and therefore the divine Being who was born in the flesh. The flesh alone could not be the Son of God because the flesh could not be God. Moreover, this was supposed to be predicted in Psalm 86 (87):5, which has nothing to do with the idea of “God becoming a man” but refers to all nations which will be one day united under one cult of Yahweh and the rule of Jerusalem.

This process of the generation of the Son of God was exactly what the Hellenes were saying about the generation of the sons and daughters of Zeus. These were gods in human flesh. Mary conceived by the Spirit, and therefore that which was born was the Spirit, too, but born in human flesh. According to

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, XXVI.9.

the Greek rule expressed by John 3:6, “That which is born in the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.”

Tertullian then asks the question, which God was born in it, that is, in the flesh? And he answers – the Word and the Spirit, which became incarnate by the will of the Father (again with reference to John 1:1–2; 14, though the wording here is “the Word became flesh,” but used obviously in a metaphorical sense). Through a lengthy discussion, Tertullian explains the mode in which the Word could exist in the flesh without transfiguration into flesh, because “The Word is God and ‘the Word of the Lord remains for ever’ (Isa. 40:8) – even by holding on unchangeably in his own form.” Thus, God cannot change in substance (undergo transfiguration), and the only possibility left was that the Word became clothed in flesh. Tertullian, making reference to the already mentioned Psalm 86 (87):5 (God became man) and to Romans 1:3–4 (the predicted one was to be the Son of God, according to the Spirit, and the seed of David, according to the flesh), claims that Jesus is of both natures, of both substances remaining in opposition, God and Man. “We see plainly the twofold state, which is not confounded, but conjoined in one person – Jesus, God and Man.” Moreover, Tertullian insists that the property of each substance is so preserved that:

The Spirit on the one hand did all things in Jesus suitable to itself, such as miracles, and mighty deeds, and wonders; and the flesh, on the other hand, exhibited the affections which belong to it. It was hungry under the devil’s temptation, thirsty with the Samaritan woman, it wept over Lazarus, was troubled even unto death, and at last actually died. (Matt. 4:2–3; Jn. 4:6–7; Matt. 26:38)⁴⁷

The basis for this interpretation is the Stoic theory of mixing physical bodies in which the type of mixing called blending preserved the capacity for separation of the mixed substances again from one another. In such a blending, the components preserve their own specific qualities, natures, in the mixture and are not replaced by a third substance.⁴⁸ The Spirit, Logos, could not be transformed into flesh or the third substance, because then it would have ceased to be God: “We see a twofold state, not confused but joined in one person, God and man, Jesus.”⁴⁹ Just as in the Godhead, Tertullian saw three persons united by one substance, in his Christology the one person had two substances.

Thus, Tertullian summarizes his speculation: Jesus consists of two substances – of flesh as a man and of Spirit as God. And that part which is Spirit, the angel designated as the Son of God, reserving for the flesh the appellation the Son of Man (1 Tim. 2:5).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibid., XXVII.11.

⁴⁸ *SVF*, II.473.

⁴⁹ *Adversus Praxean* XXVII.14.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

THE NAME CHRIST: TERTULLIAN'S CONTRADICTIONS

Next, Tertullian analyzes the name "Christ."⁵¹ This term is a name, not a surname, and it means anointed (*unctus*) and is not a proper name but an accessory to a name. Jesus is called Christ, that is, anointed from the mystery of his anointing,⁵² which is attested by Peter in Acts 2:36 and by other statements (Acts 4:27; 1 Jn. 1:3; 2:22; 3:23; 4:2; 5:1; Rom. 1:1–4; Gal. 1:1) and by statements in the Old Testament referring to the Messiah (the anointed one) (Amos 4:13; Ps. 2:2; Isa. 45:1). "Jesus" is the proper name given by the angel, and "Christ" (the Anointed) is the predicable name deriving from the fact of anointing;⁵³ therefore, Christ (the Anointed) must be the Son. The Son of God was anointed by God his Father and is designated by two names: "Jesus" and "Christ" (the Anointed one). According to Tertullian, Paul speaks everywhere of "God the Father and our lord Jesus Christ (the Anointed)."⁵⁴ But Tertullian interprets Paul as using the term in the meaning of a pneumatic being derived from God. Thus, blind must be the one who perceives in the name of Christ another God if he ascribes to the Father the name Christ because Jesus said, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (Jn. 20:17).

So, according to Tertullian, it was Christ (the Anointed) who died on the cross (1 Cor. 15:5; 15:3; Jn. 6:60). But he immediately notices a contradiction: How could a Son of God in the Greek sense die? Therefore, he adds that there are two substances in the Christ (Anointed) Jesus – the human and the divine, one mortal and the other one immortal. So it is manifest that when Paul declared that Christ, the Son of God died, it is "in the sense in which he was flesh and Man and the Son of Man, not as being the Spirit and the Word and the Son of God." So, it was the man who died and not the Spirit, the pneumatic Son of God. The nature that died was the one that was anointed, that is, the flesh. But here Tertullian contradicts himself again because he earlier stated that the one who was anointed was the Son.

Through this type of twisted speculation, Tertullian claims to avoid the double blasphemy of the followers of Praxeas (they alleged not only that the Father died but also that he was crucified). Death by hanging was considered a curse (Deut. 21:23), and such a death is compatible to the Son according to Paul (Gal. 3:13), so he died as human nature. Similarly, Tertullian argues that the Father could not suffer as God or even "share in the suffering" (*compatitur*)⁵⁵ of the Son (as the monarchians claimed). Moreover, even the Son is incapable of suffering under the conditions of his existence as God.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ibid., XXVIII.

⁵² Ibid., XXVIII.1.

⁵³ Ibid., XXVIII.7.

⁵⁴ Ibid., XXVIII.6.

⁵⁵ Ibid., XXIX.5.

⁵⁶ Ibid., XXIX.6.

Tertullian's argument is that the Father is separate from the Son but not as God, using again the analogy of the river and the fountain. But this time in his analogy the mud that may soil the river does not reach the fountain, and even if the water suffers injury, it is only the water in the river and not that in the fountain. The conclusion that Tertullian draws from this is that the Spirit of God, whatever suffering it might have been capable of in the Son, it could not have suffered as the Father, and the Spirit of God suffered nothing as the Spirit of God, because all the suffering was with the Son. It was quite another matter for the Father to suffer with the Son in the flesh.⁵⁷ This is supposed to be an analogy to human suffering for God – humans are unable to suffer for God “unless the Spirit of God is in humans” and thus God bestows on humans the capacity of suffering.

THE SON'S DEATH ON THE CROSS AS THE SON OF MAN

Tertullian finally refers to the quote from Matthew 27:46 claiming that the text referred to the voice of flesh and soul, thus of man, and not of the Word and Spirit, that is, God. This pronouncement was uttered to prove the impassibility of God who forsook his Son insofar as he handed over his human substance to the suffering of death. And this was proved according to Tertullian by Paul and by Isaiah (Rom. 8:32; Isa. 57:6). But the Father did not forsake his Son in all other respects because into his Father's hands the Son commended his spirit (Luke 23:46). We are led to understand that if the Spirit remained in the flesh, the body could not die. Thus, the pneumatic Son's death amounts to being forsaken in its human nature, and the Son “died” and was resurrected according to the scripture (1 Cor. 15:3). It was the Son who “ascends to the higher parts of heaven and who descends into the inner parts of the earth”⁵⁸ with all the pictorial description repeated after the scripture (Eph. 4:9; Jn. 3:13; Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55; Ps. 109 (110):1; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11). In the meantime, he sent forth the gift that he received from the Father, that is, the third name in the divinity and the third grade in the divine majesty, who is at the same time interpreter of the divine economy and the guide leading all those who accept the word of the new prophecy into the truth of the Christian mystery.⁵⁹

Tertullian claims that the doctrine of Praxeas refuses to acknowledge the Son and the Spirit in addition to the Father. This is the distinction between the Jews and Christians and a basis for the new covenant, which is revealed by God so that men could know now the unity of God in a new manner and openly in his proper names and persons.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid., XXIX.6–7.

⁵⁸ Ibid., XXX.4.

⁵⁹ Ibid., XXX.5.

⁶⁰ Ibid., XXXI.1–3.

SUMMARY OF TERTULLIAN'S DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Tertullian was the first who coined the Latin term *trinitas* for the description of the three divine entities in his doctrine of the Trinity.⁶¹ He translated the Greek term τριάς, which was used for the first time in describing the Christian triad by Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, circa 180 C.E. In one place the word was used by Valentinus to describe the triple nature of man.⁶² Theophilus describes the three days before the creation of the luminaries as “types of the Triad [τριάς], of God, and His Word, and His wisdom.”⁶³ Before Tertullian, Justin Martyr developed the Logos Christology and described the Christian Triad in terms of rank or order (τάξις) of its members.

The term triad must have been in common use in philosophy and religion for the definition of principles in the world and for the worship of gods.⁶⁴ Greek philosophy abounds in the concept of triads or three entities. The term was also used to describe various abstractions, for example, “flesh, souls, spirit,” and “the sacred Triad faith, hope, love.”⁶⁵ It goes back to Pythagoras and can be found in many cultures as representing groupings of three divinities. In its early version, the doctrine of the Trinity was described in terms of subordination to God the Father, but it was condemned by the Council of Constantinople in 381. If we wish to differentiate between groupings of three entities without any special connotation of the unity, we use today the term “triad.”

But Tertullian's innovation was that he developed the concept of a triune God applied to the Christian myth and changed the meaning of the original term τριάς, though only in Latin. The question arises, however, whether Tertullian developed this idea of a triune divinity by himself or was inspired by other sources. Tertullian shows in his writings enormous erudition and knowledge of cultures and literatures of his time, a familiarity with Egyptian religion and with mystery religions, Greek as well as Egyptian. He mentions in *De Corona* (7), *De Pallio* (3), and in *Adversus Marcionem* (1.3) the story of Osiris and Isis. In his *Apology* (6.8) he mentions the triad of Sarapis, Isis, and Harpocrates. In *De Anima* (15.5) he alludes to the Egyptian hermetic writings. So it is only natural and logical to infer that he was influenced by the surrounding culture with which he was intimately acquainted. He found useful the Egyptian concept of the trinity for interpretation of the Christian biblical

⁶¹ Ibid., III.1.

⁶² Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 7.

⁶³ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum*, bk. 2.15, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2.

⁶⁴ Aristotle in his *De Caelo* says: “For, as the Pythagoreans say, the world and all that is in it is determined by the number three, since the beginning, middle and end give the number of an ‘all,’ and the number they give is the triad. And so, having taken these three from nature as (so to speak) laws of it, we make further use of the number three in the worship of the Gods.” *De Caelo*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited and with introduction by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), I.13–14.

⁶⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, bk. 4.7, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2.

mythology and, at the same time, explained it in metaphysical terms using the Middle Platonic Logos doctrine and the Stoic logical categories. His theory is based on the assumption of unity and unchangeability of the substance, that is, the spirit as the substance of God and the relative distinctiveness of the three members of the divinity.

We shall repeat briefly the major postulates of Tertullian:

1. Tertullian fully used the Logos Christology in a conscious effort to integrate Christianity and classical Greek culture. God is a transcendent being, and it is impossible for him to enter into a direct relation with the world of time and space.
2. The Logos is as the Prolation of God, which took place only for and with the world as a necessary mediator to perform a work that God could not perform. Thus, the Logos assumed its "own form" when God said, "Let there be light."
3. Tertullian ascribed to light a metaphysical and ontological meaning in accordance with Greek theology of the second century.
4. The Logos is only a "portion" (*portio*) of God, in the same way as is the ray only a "portion" of the sun. The difference between them is in measure, not of mode. The Logos is a produced and a reduced divinity, with its substance spirit or *pneuma*, brought to a level that could become creator and principle of the world.
5. The prolation of the Logos was a voluntary and temporary act of will of God. He is thus subordinate to and less than the Father, subject to the Father's will, and after accomplishing his mission, he returns to the divine substance.
6. Tertullian was very explicit as to the temporary origin of the Logos Son. His argumentation came from the analysis of the terms "God" and "Lord," and of "Father" and "Judge." But later Tertullian distinguished between the uttered Logos, *Sermo*, and the unuttered Logos or Ratio, which was an integral part of the divinity: "For he [God] had with him that which he possessed in himself, that is to say his own Reason. For God is rational and Reason was first in him; and so all things were from himself."⁶⁶ But certainly God's Reason was not an individual being as the prolated Son. The prolation of the Logos Son was a temporary mechanism to accomplish work by a transcendent God.
7. Tertullian postulated the unity of God by using the Egyptian concept, the "tri-unity." God is one but has the following internal structure, described in Tertullian's terminology as "dispensation" or "economy." He has a physical pneumatic Son (*Filius*), his Word (*Sermo*), who proceeded from himself. Through this Son all things are made and the

⁶⁶ *Adversus Praxean V.*

world maintained. The Son was sent by the Father into the virgin and was born as a man and God, as Son of Man and as Son of God, and is called Jesus the Anointed (Christ). He was resurrected by the Father, taken into heaven (*in caelo*), and will come to judge all men, dead and alive, before the institution of God's Kingdom on earth. In the meantime, the Father in heaven sent the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

8. Before Tertullian there was a tradition of the unity of the Godhead as a concept derived from the Hebrew tradition, and a tradition of the triad, of his appearance and function, as formulated by the Apologists and based on Philonic hypostatization of the divine powers. The innovation introduced by Tertullian was the ascription of the relative unity to the triadic entities found in the Christian Logos theory as the unity of substance. Starting from the baptismal formula, Tertullian distinguished three persons and prolations with specific names in one God who is the common substance as a mode of existence of God and his economy, that is, his internal organization. Tertullian never defined what he meant by the term "person"; we must understand this word as a depiction of a distinct divine individual with a distinct quality and function. Substance is the unifying element in the divinity, whereas person is the differentiating characteristic in the life of God. If so, then there is no real division in the Godhead, only a purely relative modal distinction. But then Tertullian is in contradiction when he claims a reality of the Word, and of the Holy Spirit by extension, as a *substantiva res* and a rational substance. It seems to be a verbal device to reconcile a popular triadic interpretation of the terms found in the New Testament and in the baptismal formula with the requirement of the oneness of God.

Another term used for "person" is "hypostasis," which originally meant a sediment, foundation, substructure, individual substance, individual existence, or reality.⁶⁷ In philosophical meaning it represents contrast between substances, the real things, and the reflection as in the mirror, or between reality and illusion. From about 350 C.E. in the Christian world it meant "individual reality," "individual," and "person." There was much confusion in the usage of the word because it was often wrongly translated as "substance." In the English usage the term means "personality" or "personal existence" and is distinguished from both "nature" and "substance." From the noun the verb was formed by early Christian and Gnostic writers, "hypostatize" meaning making into or

⁶⁷ *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, revised and augmented throughout by Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, introduced by Roger A. Bullard, translated by Bentley Layton, in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, edited by J.M. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 162.

regarding as a self-existent substance or person, thus personalization or individualization.

9. The task of Tertullian, therefore, was to develop a formula by which the complete deity of Jesus and the reality of his identity as the Logos or the Mediator are distinct from the source deity yet without creating two Gods. In Logos theory, the distinction was introduced between the transcendent God and the derivative God, the absolute and the relative, and special problems arise when we consider now the question of eternity or temporality of this distinction. The new trinitarian formulation evidently was not a popular or accepted belief during the time of Tertullian because he emphasized that the simple may have problems understanding this trinitarian assumption. Instead, they accept a triadic division of the unity of God, whereas, according to Tertullian, the triadic doctrine is a misunderstanding of God's economy (*oikonomia*) or dispensation/disposition (*dispensatio* or *dispositio*).
10. Tertullian was a profoundly Stoic philosopher who developed his understanding of the trinitarian God from the analysis of four general Stoic logical categories. His theory is based on the assumption of unity and unchangeability of the substance and the relative distinctiveness of the three members of the divinity, that is, the Spirit as the substance of God. His concept of substance and the Spirit as the material substance of God is unquestionably Stoic and used to describe the nature of God.⁶⁸ The source of these assumptions is found in the four categories of being as formulated by the Stoics: substrates or substances of everything that exists (ὑποκείμενα), qualities (ποιά), the modes of existence or dispositions (πῶς ἔχοντα), and the relative modes or dispositions of existence (πρὸς τί πῶς ἔχοντα).⁶⁹
11. Tertullian, using such speculations, transposed the logical relationship between objects onto the metaphysical existence of the divine Father and his Son, and also the third entity – the Holy Spirit. Thus, the divine Father and the divine Son have their existence conditioned by their disposition only. They are not identical. Moreover, the Father makes a Son and the Son makes a Father by logical relationship, that is, relative disposition.
12. Tertullian used a similar analysis for the term monarchy and deduced that it does not preclude the monarch from having a son or from ministering his own monarchy by a few agents. Even then the monarchy is not divided and does not cease to be one. Such an idea of the unity of the monarchy projected on the divine monarchy, where the divine

⁶⁸ *Adversus Marcionem* II.9; III.6; IV.33; V.8; *Adversus Praxean* XIV, XXVI; *De Oratione* I; *Apologeticum* XXVIII; G. C. Stead, "Divine Substance in Tertullian," *Journal of Theological Studies* 14 (1963): 46–66.

⁶⁹ *SVF*, II.329, 330, 333–335, 369, 371, 373; John M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 152–172.

essence is one and is governed by the many Sons of God, was a common concept among the Greeks and non-Greeks as well.

13. The unity of God (monarchy of the king) hinges on the unity of substance (closeness of the king's family or administrators), which is the basis for "internal dispensation" or "economy," that is, the internal organization of God. Transposing this analogy to the situation of the Deity, the Son derives his substance from the substance of the Father and does nothing without the Father's will, because he received his power from the Father. In this way the divine monarchy (i.e., unity) is preserved. The same applies to the "third degree," because the third pneumatic being, the Holy Spirit (*Spiritus*), proceeded from the Father through the Son (without explanation of how and why).
14. Tertullian himself was very equivocal about the third person of the Trinity describing him also as the *Spiritus in sermone*.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Tertullian was the first to call the Holy Spirit God explicitly in a theological treatise, but it seems that he only repeated what was probably religious folklore in the Greek environment. Tertullian, under the influence of the Logos speculation, was the first to conceive the Spirit as a prolation from the Son as the Son is from the Father, and therefore subordinate to the Son as the Son is to the Father. This is the most characteristic trait of his doctrine. Still Tertullian preserved the conception of the Father as the ultimate source in his assertion that the Spirit, being the third degree in the Godhead, proceeds "from no other source than from the Father through the Son."⁷¹ The Father and the Son are represented by the root and the stem, the fountain and the river, the sun and its ray; so the Spirit, being "third from God and the Son," is as the fruit of the tree, which is third from the root, or as the stream from the river, which is third from the fountain or as the apex from the ray, which is third from the sun.⁷² It may be said that the Son receives the Spirit from the Father yet himself sends him forth: "The third name in the Godhead and the third Grade in the divine Majesty, the Declarer of the One Monarchy of God and yet, at the same time, the Interpreter of the Economy."⁷³
15. Tertullian, by analysis of the verbal formulations of the announcement of Jesus' birth, argues that by saying that it was the "Spirit of God" and not simply God who came upon Mary, the author wanted to emphasize that it was only a portion of the whole Godhead that entered her and became "the Son of God." But, at the same time, the Spirit of God must be the same as the Word for the Spirit is the substance of God and as such it must be the substance of the Word because the Word is the operation

⁷⁰ *Adversus Praxean* XII.3.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, IV.

⁷² *Ibid.*, VIII.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, XXX.

of the Spirit, and the two are one and the same. But how Tertullian equated the operation (*Sermo*) with the substantive being (*substantiua res*) is not explained. Thus, the Spirit and the Word are God, but they are not actually the very same as the source. The Word is God so far as it is of the same substance as God himself and as an actually existing being (*substantiua res*) and a portion of the Godhead.

16. After claiming to have established that there is a distinction between the Father and the Son without destroying their union by making an analogy to the union of the sun and the ray, or of the fountain and the river, Tertullian next attempted to establish that there is a distinction between the two natures united in the Son. Tertullian explained the mode in which the Word could exist in the flesh without transfiguration into flesh, because “The Word is God and ‘the Word of the Lord remains for ever’ (Isa. 40:8) – even by holding on unchangeably to his own form.” Thus, God cannot change in substance (undergo transfiguration), and the only possibility left was that the Word became clothed in flesh. Jesus is of both natures, of both substances remaining in opposition, God and Man. Moreover, Tertullian insisted that the property of each substance is so preserved that “The Spirit on one hand did all things in Jesus suitable to itself, such as miracles, and mighty deeds, and wonders; the flesh, on the other hand, exhibited the affections which belong to it.”⁷⁴ Just as in the Godhead Tertullian saw three persons united by one substance, in his Christology the one person had two substances.

In previous speculations of church fathers such as Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, and Athenagoras, the Son and Holy Spirit were assigned subordinate roles in the Triad. The same can be said about Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who are not subjects of the present study.⁷⁵ These early church fathers followed the Greek Platonic and Middle Platonic speculations either directly or through Philo of Alexandria. Later, in the third century, Plotinus (204–270 C.E.) developed his own abstract doctrine of a metaphysical trinity,⁷⁶ but this was already after the formative years of the Christian doctrine. Moreover, the members of the Plotinian trinity do not have the character of anthropomorphic “persons,” and they do not represent the Tertullian sense of the triunity, namely, *una substantia, tres personae*, consubstantiality of individual separateness.

⁷⁴ Ibid., XXVII.11.

⁷⁵ Origen, *On First Principles*, translation and introduction by G. W. Butterworth (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973); Clement of Alexandria, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. II.

⁷⁶ Plotino, *Enneadi*, traduzione con testo Greco di Giuseppe Fagin, presentazione di Giovanni Reale, revisione di Roberto Radice (Milano: Rusconi, 1996).

Thomas Aquinas and the Accepted Concept of the Trinity

THOMAS AQUINAS AND HIS CONCEPT OF THE TRINITY

Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) formulated the accepted concept of the Trinity in its final version in his *Summa theologiae* Prima pars, Quaestiones 27–32.¹ According to Thomas, the chief revelation of the New Testament is that God is not in one Self but three, a concept that he presented more fully in his *Summa contra Gentiles* IV, 1–49.² The ancient church fathers believed that the Trinity was revealed already in the Old Testament, and though Thomas relies mostly on the New Testament, he also quotes as proof Old Testament texts. Moreover, the sending of the Son (understood as a real sending down of a cosmic pneumatic being) is the beginning and end of the divine scheme of things. Each of the divine “Persons” has a specific function to perform according to his character, and the purpose and the fruit of human life is the knowledge of the Trinity.

The concept of the son of God has a long tradition in various cultures and originates in the Mediterranean region from the treatment of the Pharaohs by the Egyptians. In the Old Testament and Hebrew tradition, the title had a political meaning and was used for kings or prominent leaders, such as priests and prophets of the nation. It was also used as a description of a special distinction for people of Israel as a whole and sometimes for all pious individuals. In the New Testament this title referred especially to the Savior/ Jesus in the meaning of a special moral relationship with God as well as a special mode of his birth not unlike the birth of Greek heroes and secondary gods. The concept of the Holy Spirit is also treated in the New Testament in the Hebrew manner described previously.

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Latin text and English translation (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 1a, 27–32.

² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, various translators (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), IV.1–49, *Salvation*, translated by Charles J. O’Neil.

The entire discourse of Thomas is concerned with the meaning of words found in the scripture taken out of their Hebrew cultural context and read literally as describing the divine reality in the sense of Middle Platonic and Neoplatonic metaphysics. His discursive approach is exactly the same as that of the Hellenistic philosophers in their metaphysics.

Origin or Procession and “Spiration”

Thomas begins the discourse on the Trinity with a discussion of the origin or procession of the divine “Persons.” Because terms such as “fatherhood” and “sonship” cannot be applied to God, whom he understood as an “intellect,” in their material sense, Thomas looks for their meaning in the noetic sense as representing relations. Similarly the term *procedere* (from which derives *processio*) found in the Latin translation (e.g., Jn. 8:42: *ego enim ex Deo processi et veni neque enim a me ipso veni sed ille me misit*) cannot be used materially. His approach then is based on the analogy between the procession of thought and of love in the human mind and that in the presumed God’s nature.

He borrowed this approach from Augustine (354–430 C.E.), who used it for his interpretation of the Trinity.³ Augustine took for granted the literal meaning of the term “God’s Word” (*Verbum* = *Logos*) found in John’s prologue already interpreted in the church tradition by Middle and Neoplatonic religiophilosophical metaphysics, and he analogized it to the human intellectual thought. Similarly, using the same Greek doctrine, Augustine deduced the identity of the term “God’s love” with the cosmic being of the Holy Spirit from the text of Romans 5:5 (“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit”) by interpreting the text as having a physical meaning.

Thomas assumes that *Verbum* (*Logos*) is a cosmic being of intellectual substance (*spirit* or *pneuma*) being a procession or emanation of divine being. As the basis for this assumption he takes the statement found in John 8:42: “I came forth from God.” The passage concerns Jesus scolding the Jews for not heeding his message and for attempting to kill him. Jesus claims that his message comes from his Father who sent him and is liberating them from sin. Jews, in self-defense, claim that they have God as their Father, but Jesus replies to them that they are from the devil as their father, and he himself was sent by the Father and therefore they should love him. This is a convoluted way of speaking. Jesus was no more literally “sent” by the Father than the Jews “had” the devil as their father. The reference to the Father, both as God and as the devil, is metaphorical and has a moral sense. Thomas, however, takes the literal

³ Augustine, *De Trinitate* 2, in Migne, PL 10.58; Augustine, *On the Trinity* 8–15, edited by Gareth B. Matthews, translated by Stephen McKenna (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Augustine, *The Trinity*, translated by Stephen McKenna (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1963).

meaning of the concept of sonship in the physical sense as it applies to Jesus, but not to the Jews.

Thomas believes to have established that Jesus is the procession (*processio*) or emanation (*emanatio*) from God. The next step is to understand this procession in such a way that it would comply with several other New Testament statements, for example, with 1 John 5:20 "... so that we may be in his true Son, he is true God." 1 John is an admonition to accept the message of eternal life (according to the teaching of Jesus about the eternal Kingdom of God on earth) and to obey the moral commandments. Jesus was charged with a mission to save the world through his moral teaching and, according to Catholic teaching, by his sacrifice, thus giving the men a true understanding of God. The passage quoted by Thomas refers to an exalted Jesus who was elevated to a divine dignity (and not as a God) after his death, though there is no indication of him existing before being born.

In 1 Corinthians Paul admonishes Christians against the perpetration of the sin of fornication and advises respect of their bodies, asking "do you not know that your members are the temple of the Holy Spirit [Ghost]?" (6:19). Paul means by this that the bodies are receptacles of the vivifying action of a divine spirit (physical *pneuma*), which is, in accordance with the ancient view, an agent making living things alive. The other possible explanation of the text is that the bodies become also sanctified by the moral effect of the divine action on humans. Thomas then concludes that the Holy Spirit is a being and must be God "because only God can have a temple." But in Paul's letter clearly only the Father is God (as in the whole New Testament the term God always refers to the Father); Jesus Christ is only the lord who was given dominion over men by God.

Thomas claims that in John 5:19 ("the Son cannot do anything by himself") and in many other passages it is shown that the Father and the Son are not the same person (individual, being), therefore they must be different. But again Thomas assumes that these two names, Father and Son, are cosmic entities. In addition, the Gospel of John contradicts other trinitarian assumptions of the equality of the three persons. The Son is here clearly dependent on the Father since he does not have any power of his own.

On these premises, Thomas now builds the understanding of the procession as an action within the intellect that comes forth as a concept of the thing, which is understood as proceeding from the awareness of the one who does the thinking. By analogy to human thinking, this proceeding, concept, or an intellectual emanation (*emanatio intelligibilis*) are called "intellectual word" (*verbum intelligibile*), as they are expressed by an utterance, remaining within. Moreover, because God's understanding and existence (self-existence) are a peak of perfection, by necessity God's Word must be one with its source, that is, God, and is in no way different from it.

This procession within the divine, according to Thomas, can be called generation in spite of the logical contradiction because such is the evidence

of the scripture: "Today I have begotten thee" (Ps. 2:7). Thomas obviously assumes that the Psalm refers to the cosmic Son (Christ). The Psalm, however, refers to King David who is considered the son of God as he is God's anointed. At the moment of being anointed, he figuratively was begotten as God's son. The whole idea of "being begotten" of the Son comes from the projection of the physical material generation of Jesus on his cosmic and pneumatic counterpart.

Thomas further explains that if generation is to be used in a proper sense, then it must be used by analogy to the generation of higher animals; the thing that is issued must be of the same nature as the source. Analogy to living things is correct according to Thomas, because living things originate "from a principle which is alive and conjoined to it." He must have meant by the terms "principle," "alive," and "conjoined," the soul that is supposed to be a spirit (*pneuma*) just as God is a spirit. Thus, generation applies to the situation when there is repetition of the same likeness, for example, sonship. This is the ancient principle of similarity. And such a concept Thomas applies to the procession of the Word in God (therefore Son): it is like mind's action and is also a vital activity (*operatio vitae*); it reproduces a specific resemblance, for the intellect conceives the likeness of what is understood; and it exists in God in the same nature, for in God understanding is the very substance of the one who understands or to be and to understand are identical. Thus, the procession of the Word is called generation and the Word is called Son. According to Thomas then, God in thinking of himself begets God, or his act of understanding issues in Word, which is identical with his being. But obviously such an interpretation poses a restriction on divine unchangeability – thinking implies change and temporality, to say nothing about the nonsense of generating a separate ontological entity in God.

Analyzing further the human psychic process Thomas concludes that there is in us as in the noetic world another action in addition to the action of the intellect. That is the action of the will, whose coming forth is love whereby what is loved is in the lover (just as what is understood or expressed by word is in the knower). But in God, because will and intellect are not different things, it would seem that there is no other procession except procession of the Word. But Thomas claims that the scripture again demonstrates another procession other than the Son: "I will ask my Father and he will give you another Advocate" (Jn. 14:16) who "proceeds from the Father" (Jn. 15:26). This is supposed to be the Holy Spirit (cosmic being) but is also called the Spirit of Truth. The references in the Gospel point to an intellectual enlightenment and not to any cosmic entity. But Thomas assumes from the analogy to the process of human psyche the existence in God of the second procession on another level or order – namely, the procession of Love (*processio amoris*). God knows himself, and he loves himself; thus, God is in himself as what is loved is in the lover. Though in God mind and the conception of mind (the Word) as well as will and intellect are the same, because the meaning of love implies issuing

forth from what the mind conceives, the procession of Love must be distinct from the procession of the Word. Procession of Love in God cannot be called “generation” because of the way in which intellect and will are different from each other (though they have the same substance). What is understood is in the intellect through its likeness. But actual willing is in the intellect not because of a likeness of what is willed as such in the person who wills but because the will tends to what is willed. The concept of generation applies to the situation when a begetter provides its own likeness. Procession according to the will’s action is considered according to the urge and motion toward something. In God what proceeds as Love proceeds as a “breathing of the spirit” (*procedit ut spiritus*), that is, a living motion and impulse. This difference between the two processes was not known to the Greek patristic tradition. The distinction between them is not according to their nature. But the specific character (*propria ratio*) of each one of them is distinguished according to their specific meanings, which are signified by their names. Who is begotten is the likeness (image) of his parents, and likeness is the beginning of loving (again in human psychological terms); then who is begotten is the source of Love. More clearly Thomas formulated the origin of the second procession in another work.⁴ What is loved is in the lover as it is loved; thus, the loving comes from both the power of affection of the lover and the appreciation of the good loved which is loved. Hence there are two sources of what is loved in the lover: namely, the power of love (the Father) and the known thing as perceived, that is, the formed Word about the loved thing (the Son). “Therefore since in God understanding and loving himself the Word is the Son and the Word’s originator is the Father, the Holy Spirit (who is love in so far as God is in himself as what is loved) must proceed from the Father and the Son.”

We have to use for God the same terms as we use for creatures. Thus we use the term “generation” for passing on the nature of creatures and the same term for the procession of God. But for procession that is not “generation,” Thomas proposes to use the term “spiration” (*spiratio*) because it designates a procession of the spirit (*processio spiritus*), that is, motion and impulse. Here Thomas is using the term “spirit” in a different meaning, taken from human everyday psychology. But to fit the term into the triadic concept of divinity, he identifies it as a substance, and thus it becomes a hypostasis, that is, a cosmic being.

Now the question arises whether there are many more processions in God since God has many more attributes besides “knowledge” and “will.” But Thomas claims that in God there are only two who proceed; therefore, there are only two processions, namely, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This idea comes, of course, from the occurrence of these two terms in the scripture from the literal

⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology*, translated by C. Vollert (St. Louis: Herder, 1947), 45–49.

verbal reading of the Gospel statements. To justify this conclusion, Thomas refers again to the situation in humans. Because processions correspond to the actions of the mind that remain within the agent, and in the human noetic and divine natures there are only two such actions – to understand and to will – thus only two processions, the Word and Love, exist. All other attributes of God, for example, power, refer to what God does in the world external to him.

Divine Relations

Thomas, having assigned analogies among the terms found in the scripture, on the operation of the human mind, and its projection on God's nature, he now searches for further analogies of relationship. His goal is to harmonize the biblical term "Father" with the source (fatherhood = *paternitas*) of the Word and the biblical term "Son" with the Word (sonship = *filiatio*). Earlier fathers of the church already interpreted the biblical terms "Father" and "Son" as referring to the relatedness of persons within the divine nature. Augustine wrote:

In God nothing is said according to the accident, because there is nothing changeable in him, nor does everything that is said of him refer to his substance. For something can be said of him in regard to relations, as the relation of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Father. There is no question here of an accident, because the one is always the Father and the other is always the Son, not indeed in the sense that the Father, from whom the Son is born, never ceases to be the Father because the Son never ceases to be the Son, but in the sense that the Son was always born and never began to be the Son.... Consequently, although to be the Father and to be the Son are two different things, still there is no difference in their substance, because the names, Father and Son, do not refer to substance but to the relation and the relation is no accident because it is not changeable.⁵

Thomas's approach is through the analysis of the Aristotelian category of relations. Relations are relative terms indicating only a reference to something. They are a result of one thing originating from another. Categories of relatedness can be considered from the logical or ontological point of view. For example, "father – son" is a real ontological relationship recognized by our mind, but classifying man with animal as a species with its genus is a conceptual or logical relatedness. Moreover, real relationships can be subdivided, according to Thomas, into relatedness of beings, that is, substances, or when the reference is in the nature of things (or their essence) that are attracted and connected with each other. In created things, relation exists as an accident in a subject, and relatedness of creatures supervenes on their substances. Their relationships are modes of being and not their nature. This is so because creatures are characterized as imperfect. In God, however, according to Thomas's own definition, nothing is as an accident in a subject, and nothing can be attributed

⁵ Augustine, *De Trinitate* 5,5,6.

to him otherwise than identical with his nature because he is absolutely simple. A really existing relation in God is identical with the divine nature or substance. Thomas concludes that if there is a procession generated – that is, the Word from the source that is a principle (intellect) and has the same nature – then both necessarily belong to the same order and must have real relationship with each other (*sic oportet quod habeant reales respectus ad invicem*). Mind (or reason) is something real; it has a real relation to what springs from it intellectually just as corporeal things have to their physical products. These relations indicate not two realities in God but one and the same because of his perfect existence.

Now Thomas needs a concept of distinction within one nature in order to support the doctrine of the Trinity. And this need is satisfied by the relations that are distinct from one another not by nature but by relative opposition or mutual contrast within one nature. Moreover, these relations must be real distinctions; otherwise, we would have only a mental distinction as in the doctrine of Sabellius (fl. ca. 215/230).

For this purpose, Thomas follows Boethius (d. 524), by claiming, “In divine matters substance contains unity, relation unfolds trinity.”⁶ There is no distinction in God in terms of the absolute reality of his nature, but Thomas affirms the distinction between the relations from the definition and meaning of the term. The definition of the term implies reference to another and two things being in opposition, which in turn implies distinction. Although both fatherhood and sonship are the same thing in divine nature, their meanings imply distinction. Thomas, at best, shows the meaning of the words he uses and not the ontological relationship between their designates. Further, Thomas says, there are only four relations possible in God because they may be based only on actions that imply procession within God, namely procession of the Word (Logos), which is called “generation” and procession of Love which is called “spiration.” The relation of being the source of generation is “fatherhood” in the higher forms of life, and the relation of what comes into existence is “sonship.” The relation of being the source of procession of Love is called “spiration,” and the relation of what proceeds is “procession.”

Concept of “Personhood”

Now Thomas has to tackle another concept, namely, the category of “personhood” (*personalitas*). He takes again as the basis for his speculations the definition coined by Boethius: “A person is an individual substance of a rational nature.”⁷ Aristotle uses the term “substance” in two meanings: as the “first substance” (οὐσία πρῶτη) or an “individual being,” and as the “second

⁶ Boethius, *De Trinitate* 6, in Migne, PL 64.1255.

⁷ Boethius, *De duabus naturis*, in Migne, PL 64.1343–1345.

substance” (οὐσία δεύτερα) or as “type of beings.”⁸ Thomas suggests using the term “substance” in both meanings but to restrict its range to the first substance by adding “individual.” By this formulation, Thomas wants to rule out the idea that a “person” can be assumable from a greater being – for example, human nature in Christ, which is not a person because it is taken up by a greater being, the Logos of God. Moreover, the general term “substance” (οὐσία) has two meanings: that which is contained in the definition of a thing (*quidditas rei*) and for which the Latin term is essence (*essentia*); and the subject (*subjectum*) or the underlying thing (*suppositum*) that subsists (*subsistit*) in the category of substance and is described by attributes. The term “substance” in the last meaning can be considered from three points of view though they refer to one reality: that which underlies common nature, we call “a thing of nature” (*res naturae*), for example, this man who is a thing of human nature; that which exists in itself and not in another, we call subsistence (*subsistentia* = οὐσιωσις); and that which supports accidental qualities (*quod supponitur accidentibus*), we call “hypostasis” (ὑπόστασις) or (individual) substance. The term derives from the verb ὑφίστημι (to stand under or to set under) and designates something that exists by itself, in its own right or a first substance. Though the Greeks used the last term for any individual substance, Thomas limits it to the individual being of rational nature, that is, to a person.

As to the term “rational substance,” Thomas follows Aristotelian ethics, explaining that it applies to those individuals who have control over their actions and act on their own initiative.⁹ Also the term “nature” is taken in the Aristotelian meaning as “that principle of change and permanence in a subject which is intrinsic to it and not accidental.”¹⁰ Thomas understands it as the specific difference that completes the definition and derives from a special form of a thing. It comprises specific principles and not individual principles, and in things composed of matter and form it refers to the composition of both of them as principles of the species. The terms “hypostasis” and “person” comprise the idea of individual principles that are not identical with the essence. Thus, the human soul cannot be considered a person, “individual substance,” “hypostasis,” or “first substance,” though it is a part of human nature.

Because the term “substance” can refer sometimes to “essence” and sometimes to “hypostasis” (i.e., individual substance), Thomas prefers to correlate hypostasis with subsistence rather than substance. The individual thing composed of matter and form supports accidental qualities because of the nature of matter. Yet it subsists because of the nature of the form, which gives actual existence to matter in order for an individual thing to subsist. Thus

⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited with an introduction by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), V.8.1017b25–28.

⁹ Aristotle, *Ethics* VI.7.141b14.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Physics*, translated by Robin Waterfield, with an introduction and notes by David Bostock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), II.1.192b14–20.

the term “hypostasis” is associated with matter (being a subject) and “ousiosis” or “subsistence” with form (being a subsisting thing).

The term “person” derives from the Greek term *πρόσωπον* which meant a face or mask put on by a Greek actor in a theater play, which resonated the sound. Hence in Latin the term *persona* has a root in *personare* (to sound through).¹¹ Now Thomas makes the point that according to the previous definitions the term “person” cannot be applied to God: reason implies discursive knowledge, which cannot be applied to God; God cannot be said to be of rational nature; and God cannot be called “individual substance” because the principle of individuation is matter and accidental qualities. Because, however, the term “person” was used in the “Athanasian creed, the person of the Father is other than that of the Son and that of the Holy Spirit,” Thomas accepts the term “person” arbitrarily and analogically for God claiming that it is used for God “in a higher sense” as representing “every perfection” (and not in the sense as it can be said of creations).

Tertullian was first to use the term “Trinity”;¹² Damasius (in 380) was first to pronounce anathema against those who denied the existence of three persons in the Trinity; and it was firmly established in the church by the Council of Lateran (1215). Tertullian translated the Greek term *τριάς* (triad) into the Latin term *trinitas* but added the meaning of triune to the Latin term. Also Thomas insists that though such descriptions of God are not found in the scriptures, they should be used to express the old faith and should not be considered “profane innovations.” Theologians, such as Albert the Great (1193–1280), used the term “person” analogically for God because it represents “a hypostasis distinguished by dignity.”¹³ Similarly, Thomas changes the meaning of the term “hypostasis” as referring to “subsisting thing” and not as “support for accidental qualities.” Also Thomas arbitrarily twists the meanings of other terms: “rational nature” of God is understood by Thomas not as a process of thought but as an absolute and static “intelligent nature” (*intellectualis natura*); the term “individual” (*individuum*) is not used in the sense of matter, which is the principle of individuation, but in the sense of incommunicability; the term “substance” is applied to God as “self-grounded existence” (“*Substantia*” *vero convenit Deo secundum quod significat existere per se*).

¹¹ Boethius, *De duabus naturis* 3, Migne, PL 64.1343.

¹² Tertullian, *Contra Praxeam* 3, in *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani, Opera Pars I. Opera Catholica. Pars II. Opera Montanistica*. In *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnholt: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontifici, 1954); English version in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, revised by Alexander Coxe (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), vols. III, IV.

¹³ *Dicitur persona “hypostasis proprietate personali distincta.”* Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologica*, in *Opera omnia ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum edenda, apparatu critico, notis, prolegomenis, indicibus instruenda curavit Institutum Alberti Magni Coloniense, Bernhardo Geyer praeside* (Monasterii Westfalorum, In aedibus Aschendorff, 1951–), I. tr. 10, q. 44, pp. 342–351.

By doing this, Thomas is undoing his own previous analogies between human intellectual process, human relations, and human individual existence and the corresponding equivalents in divine context. He simply adjusts the meanings of the common terms to suit his preconceived purpose.

Because Thomas believes that he established the existence of the relations within God, the question now arises whether these relations can be classified as persons. The starting point is a reference to a pseudoscriptural text 1 John 5:7, which is a later interpolation into the Gospel's text, "There are three who bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." And Thomas is asking "Three what"? His answer is "Three Persons."

Such an answer is again a projection of a preconceived doctrine on the scriptural terms used in the broader context. Thomas is doing this because he has to interpret these terms in accordance with his definition of celestial divinity, and this creates a problem. Namely, he envisages that the term "person" can be used in a variety of meanings: as a substance, something absolute; as an essence or nature; or as a relative term, relation. So to avoid various interpretations of these "three persons" as, for example, three Gods, he uses the term from the human connotation but gives it a special combined meaning to fit into his trinitarian concept of God. His argument follows that the term "person" signifies an individual substance with rational nature and what is distinct in that nature. And now we have a chain of sequences: in God distinction arises through the relation of origin, which is divine nature itself, and therefore it is subsisting; it is a substance that is a hypostasis subsisting in the divine nature and, as such, is divine nature. Thus, the term "person" signifies relation directly in God and indirectly nature, and in God relation is signified as a hypostasis. Also the same term signifies nature directly and relation indirectly, because nature is identical with hypostasis, which means "what is distinct through a relation." When used about God, "person" means relation as a subsisting thing in the divine nature, and because there are several relations, there are therefore several subsisting beings and thus several persons in God. Thomas claims that the plurality of persons in God is justified by the plurality of relative attributes that subsist and are distinct from one another. This is in contrast to God's absolute attributes that are not in relative opposition and real distinction, for example, goodness and wisdom. God is still simple and one; therefore, the numbers applied to God are only abstract numbers existing in our minds and can be whole and part in God and the Father is as much the whole as a part of the Trinity.

Plurality of Persons in God

Thomas next sees a difficulty in determining the number of persons in God; namely, if there are four relations, as he stated earlier, there should be at least four persons. Moreover, one could get an infinite procession of divine persons from the Father. To resolve this problem, Thomas again refers to the pseudoscriptural text 1 John 5:7, and from it he posits only three persons.

Thomas solves the problem by ascribing the contrasting relations to two different persons. Thus, fatherhood and sonship belong to two persons. The other two relations, “procession” and “spiration” are contrasted with each other. Therefore, either they belong to two persons, and one would have four persons in God; or one belongs to two persons, and then we would have only three persons in God, as it is required from the biblical quote. Because it is required by the biblical quote, Thomas ascribes the procession of Love, spiration, both to the person of the Father and to the person of the Son as not being relatively contrasted with either fatherhood or sonship. And thus this procession belongs to the third person, the Holy Spirit.

Coming back to the issue of plurality in God, Thomas again refers to Aristotle, who differentiated two types of division,¹⁴ one material division that represents a kind of quantity, and the other that is an opposition or diversity of forms. The last division, according to Thomas, applies to spiritual things. Numbers when applied to God do not mean a kind of quantity, as this category does not apply to God, but have a transcendental and metaphorical meaning, for example, as properties of the bodies, such as width and length. The term “one” applied to God means the denial of division and one undivided being. For example, one man means an undivided human nature or substance. Similarly, the term “many” refers to things with the meaning that none of them is divided. When used about God, these terms stand for substance (one substance) and relation (many relations) and add to nature or relation the denial of a certain dividedness. And Thomas insists that the term “one” does not exclude the term “many” but only division, which could be thought of prior to one or many. Moreover, the term “many” does not exclude unity but division between the realities forming the whole.

Now the problem arises how to differentiate the three persons with a common nature so that they would not be one person for the three, just as there is one nature. For this purpose, Thomas now changes the meaning of the term “person” and uses it as a conceptual commonness referring to an indeterminate or vague individual thing, for example, “certain man.” This term “a certain man” refers to a common nature that has its own mode of existence, that it is something subsisting by itself, that is an individual instance of that nature. But by some twist Thomas claims that the term “person” means a thing subsisting in a given nature and not an instance of that nature, which would be an individual. The common thing about the three divine persons is that they subsist in the one divine nature and are distinct from each other.

Such mind-boggling differentiations, illogical twists, and ad hoc arbitrary changes of meanings of words do not eliminate the problem of the plurality in God if we accept certain interpretations of the scriptural expressions. This was most aptly described by Basil the Great of Caesarea (329–379): “When the

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV.3; X.4.

Lord made known to us the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, he did not at the same time tell us their number. For he did not say 'Believe in the first, the second, and the third.' ... Number ... is the fruit of reflection ... either to honor the ineffable by silence or to enumerate the holy realities with reverence."¹⁵ And Ambrose (d. 397) stated something similar, claiming that it is not God's desire to save people by means of dialectical skill: "But it was not by dialectic that it pleased God to save His people; for the kingdom of God consisteth in simplicity of faith not in wordy contention."¹⁶

Thomas takes the Trinity for granted because it is formulated by the Athanasian creed "Unity is to be worshiped in trinity and trinity in unity," but it asks whether the term "trinity" can be applied to God in a theological speculation. His answer is positive claiming that, as we accept the plurality of persons in God, so we must accept trinity as a determinate term and signifying the number of persons in one nature. At the same time, "trinity is unity" signifies the persons who are numbered in one nature as the subject of any given nature are said to be in that nature. And when we say "unity in trinity," it means one nature exists in three subjects; also "God is triunal" means that there are three subjects of the godhead.

Now Thomas tackles the question of distinction between the Father and the Son. And Thomas warns of two extreme opinions, one of Arius (250–336), who claimed the trinity of substances with the trinity of persons, and the other, the opinion of Sabellius, who claimed the unity of person by the unity of nature. He is looking for a middle ground and plays on the words. To avoid Arius's opinion, we should use a term like "distinction" and to avoid terms such as "separation," "division," "inequality," "dissimilar," or "alien." To avoid Sabellius's opinion, Thomas suggests avoiding terms such as "singularity," "unique," "indistinct," or "solitary." He advocates using the term "other" (*alius*) because it implies a distinct subject (*suppositum*), and thus it is proper to say "The Son is other than the Father, since in fact he is another subject of the divine nature, just as he is another person and 'hypostasis'" (*Filius est alius a Patre quia scilicet est aliud suppositum divinae naturae, sicut est alia persona et alia hypostasis*).

Knowledge of the Divine Persons and the Trinity

The last issue Thomas considers is how we know about the divine Persons and the Trinity. First, he refers to the ancient tradition of the Pythagoreans and Platonists, who supposedly knew about the three persons in the divinity and about the generation of the Son and procession of the Spirit, by the light of natural reason. But Thomas maintains, "What they knew was that certain

¹⁵ Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 18, in Migne, PG 32.148–149.

¹⁶ Ambrose, *De fide*, I.5, in Migne, PL 16.537; English version, *On the Christian Faith*, I.5.42, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. X, 2nd series, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), p. 207.

essential attributes associated with the persons as power, wisdom, and goodness, associated respectively with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit.”

Christians too, it is claimed, developed the concept of the Trinity through natural reasoning – as examples Thomas cites Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173), who claimed that there is “an irrefutable argument for any truth.”¹⁷ Alexander of Hales (1185–1245) and Bonaventure (1217–1274) developed the argument for the Trinity, claiming that the infinite divine goodness gives itself off in the emanation (procession) of divine persons (the first divine emanation or the Son is appropriately named Virtue, and the second, the Holy Spirit, Love). Augustine claimed to prove the Trinity from the analogy with the human mind as a part of human soul and the procession of idea and love.¹⁸ The others, however, such as Hilary of Poitiers (315–ca. 367/68) and Ambrose (337–397),

¹⁷ Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate* I.4, in Migne, PL 196.892: *Credo namque sine dubio, quoniam ad quorumlibet explanationem quae necesse est esse, non modo probabilis, imo etiam necessaria argumento non deesse, quamvis ille interim contingat nostram industriam latere.* Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate: texte critique avec introduction, notes et tables*, publié par Jean Ribailier (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958).

¹⁸ Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica I. Inquisitio secunda de divinis nominibus in speciali*, pp. 511 ff. In *Doctoris irrefragabilis Alexandri de Hales Ordinis minorum Summa theologica iussu et auctoritate rmi p. Bernardini Klumper ... studio et cura pp. Collegiis. Bonaventurae ad fidem codicum edita* (Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) prope Florentiam, ex typographia Collegii s. Bonaventurae, 1924–48); Cardinal Saint Bonaventure, *Commentaria*, in quatuor libros sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi, tomus I, dist. X. a.2. qu. 2, in *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia iussu et auctoritate Rmi P. Bernardini a Portae Romatino totius ordinis minorum S.P. Francisci ministri generalis edita studio et cura PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura ad pluribus codices mss. Emenda anecdotis acta prolegomenis scholiis notisque illustrata*, vols. 1–3 (Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi). Prope Florentiam ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1882–1903), vol. 1, pp. 197–198:

Dicendum, quod, sicut probatum est supra, necesse est aliquam personam in divinis procedere per modum liberalitatis, et illam dicimus Spiritum sanctum. Hanc autem necesse est procedere per modum amoris, quia, si ponatur in divinis emanatio per modum voluntatis necesse est, quod inter omnes sit prima et nobilissima. Emanatio autem per modum amoris est huiusmodi, quod patet, si respiciamus, in anima. Affectio enim amoris est prima inter omnes affectiones et radix omnium aliarum sicut ostendat Augustinus in pluribus locis, maxime in decimo quarto de *Civitate Dei*. Et ista affectio nobilissima est inter omnes quandam plus tenet de ratione liberalitas. Unde hoc est donum in quo omnia alia dona donantur, et in quo constituent omnes deliciae substantiae intellectualis. Unde nihil in creaturis est considerare ita deliciosum, sicut amorem mutuum; et sine amore nullae sunt deliciae. Propter hoc dicit Philosophus (lib. IX Ethic. c. 9) quod amicitia aut est beatitudo, aut non sive beatitudine. Si ergo emanatio est per modum liberalitatis in divinis, necesse fuit esse primam et summam; et sic necesse fuit esse per modum amoris.

Bonaventure quotes Richard of St. Victor in dist. XXXII. a.2. qu.2, p. 337: *Si recte diceris amare amore, qui a te procedit, cur non Pater et Filius recte dicuntur amare amore, qui ab ipsis procedit?*

Cardinal Saint Bonaventure, *The Works of Bonaventure: Cardinal, Seraphic Doctor, and Saint*, translated from the Latin by José de Vinck (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, ca. 1960–1970), vols. 1–5.

indicated that the mystery of divine generation, therefore of divine persons, could not be known by the human mind: “For me the knowledge of the mystery of His [second person] generation is more than I can attain to, – the mind fails, the voice is dumb, – ay, and not mine alone, but the angels’ also.”¹⁹ “A firm faith rejects the captious and useless questions of philosophy.”²⁰

Thomas’s own view is that by natural reason we can only know God from creatures, if we assume that they are the effects of his cause. Thus, we can deduce what characterizes God as the source and creator of all that exists, and because this power is a characteristic of the whole Trinity (i.e., of the unity of its nature), we cannot know about the distinction of persons in the Trinity by our natural reason. Thomas goes even so far as to say that whoever tries to prove the trinity of persons by natural reason weakens the faith by abusing its dignity because faith concerns those things which exceed human reason – in accordance with Paul, “faith is of things that appear not”;²¹ and by detracting others from faith because unbelievers might think that believers rely on unconvincing arguments. And, according to Thomas, faith should be supported by the authority among those who are ready to accept it, and for the others, it is enough to say that the tenets of faith are not impossible.

According to Thomas, there are two types of arguments for proving something. The first argument proves sufficiently a certain principle, for example, in the natural sciences, that the celestial bodies are moving with constant velocity. In theology, such an argument would be a demonstration that God is one and similar statements. The second argument does not prove the principle sufficiently but demonstrates that its acceptance is congruent with the observed facts, for example, the argument about eccentric and epicyclic motions of the planet. In theology, such an argument concerns the Trinity when granted that, if one accepts the Trinity, “there are certain confirmations from the fitting of things, yet not such as may prove the Trinity of persons conclusively.” And he states explicitly that none of these attempts to explain the Trinity establish anything about God conclusively, because as Augustine said, “It is by faith that one arrives at knowledge but not vice versa.”²²

Why then the effort to speculate about the divine Persons in the Trinity? Thomas says that it is important for two reasons: to have a correct understanding (of his view) of the creation of things by God as presented by the Bible, namely, by affirming the procession of Love shows that God created creatures not by necessity of his nature but from love of his goodness; and to have a correct

¹⁹ Ambrose, *De Fide* I.10, in Migne, PL 16, 543; English version: *On the Christian Faith*, I.10.64, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. X, p. 212.

²⁰ Saint Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, translated by Stephen McKenna (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954), I.13; Migne, PL 9–10.

²¹ Paul, *Hebrews* II.11.

²² Augustine, *Super Joannem* 27.7, in Migne, PL 35.1618; *De Trinitate* VII.12, in Migne, PL 42.946.

understanding (of his view) of salvation as accomplished by the Son and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

What do we know about God? According to some, we should not use other expressions about God than those found in the scripture.²³ If we use properties and characteristics (*proprietas et notiones*; the Greek term for the Latin term *notiones* is ἰδιώματα γνωριστικά), they are “abstract terms standing for the concrete one” (*exponit abstractum pro concreto*).²⁴ The term used by Thomas for the characteristic, *notio*, comes probably from *nominatio* (naming) or *notificatio* (making known) and is attributed to Boethius, who defined it as “a kind of definition and a simple conception of the mind.”²⁵ He meant by this that the substance of God is identical with the existence of the three Persons, but when each Person is distinguished within this common substance, it has its own individual characteristic (*notio* = ἰδιώμα from ἴδιος = one’s own, private, personal). Thomas agrees that this approach does not compromise divine simplicity because it is the way the human mind, which belongs to the world of senses, operates. And we should use both abstract and concrete terms not only for the essential attributes when we say “godhead” or “God,” or “wisdom” and “wise,” but also for the personal attributes when we say “the fatherhood” or “the Father.” Thus we use these characteristics to describe in abstract terms the unity of the three persons (by nature in God) and the distinction between them (fatherhood, sonship, and procession) by two relations. Moreover, the characteristics are concepts (*rationes*) through which we know the Persons, though persons and relations are really in God. We cannot predicate of characteristic attributes that have to do with activity of nature or person (e.g., to create as activity of nature, and to beget as activity of person), but we can predicate such activity that has no connection to the activity of the creatures or deny the conditions that apply to the creatures (e.g., fatherhood is eternal).

The number of five characteristics, which are defined as “that which is the specific concept” through which we know the divine Person, Thomas deduces from the origin of the person. The Father has no origin, thus his characteristic is “unbegottenness” (*inascibilitas* = ἀγεννησία). But he is also known insofar as the Son is from him by “fatherhood,” and insofar as the Holy Spirit is from him by “common spiration” (*communis spiratio*). The Son as being generated (begotten) is known through “sonship” and, because another proceeds from him, also by “common spiration.” The Holy Spirit is known not because someone proceeds from him but through “procession.” Four of these five characteristics are relations; unbegottenness is only indirectly a relation. Four of them are properties, that is, characteristics proper to one person, since the “common spiration” applies to two persons. Three are personal characteristics

²³ Dionysius, *De div. nom.* I, Migne, PG 3,588.

²⁴ Praepositinus of Cremona, in Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica I*, p. 660, n. 462.

²⁵ Appendix IX, in Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 6.

because they constitute persons, whereas “unbegottenness” and “common spiration” do not.

Because in the past many conflicting views were held on the characteristics, for Thomas the problem arises, What is truth in faith? Thomas differentiates two types of truths. The chief truths are those revealed, for example, that God is three in one, or that the Son was made flesh. The false opinions on these truths lead to heresy. Secondary truths are those from which by denying them something contrary to faith might follow; for example, denying that Samuel was the son of Elcana would falsify the scripture. Such views may be held without danger of heresy until such time when the church decides the issue. Therefore, if someone knowingly maintains false views on the characteristics, he falls into heresy.

Both Thomas’s major approaches to explain the Trinity, speculation about the divine relations and speculation about the divine characteristics, have no biblical basis. These names are mentioned in the scripture in a different ideological context, and only later were they interpreted as cosmic individuals, and some activities were implicated to them. For Thomas, the basis for his speculation was not revelation as such but a specific reading of the biblical texts transmitted to him, as this was imposed by the culture of the first centuries, fixed by the authority of the ruling institution, and even legalized in the Roman code. After Nicaea, theology drove itself into a blind corner from which there was no exit. No wonder that violent coercion was the only possible reaction left as a response to independent thought and inquiry.

Today, another father, T. C. O’Brien, could candidly write, “Doubtless on his [i.e., Thomas’s] own principle of the primacy of the biblical word, a St. Thomas aware of that modern commonplace in exegesis, that ‘God’ (*ho theos*) in the New Testament means almost always ‘the Father,’ or sharing fully the perplexities surrounding the name Logos in John or pneuma (‘spirit’) throughout the New Testament, would have fashioned a quite different theology.”²⁶

The whole exercise of Thomas Aquinas concerning the doctrine of the Trinity arose first from accepting certain selected statements found in a selected set of writings designated as the New Testament and the Old Testament. These statements were interpreted in their literal sense applying ontological meanings to certain key terms, also in accordance with a certain religious philosophical tradition. Such statements then needed to be reinterpreted back to fit the presupposed description and characteristics of the divine being. This was done through redefining the terms from the human situation and condition (analogical situations and analogical terms) and fitting their meaning again to the preconceived notions about the divinity (process of analogizing). The process of redefining is arbitrary, artificial, and wishful. By this procedure,

²⁶ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 7, *The Trinity*, translation, introduction, and notes by T. C. O’Brien, XVI.

Thomas thought that he could make the concept of the Trinity intelligible to the human mind.

This method has no objective value and clearly demonstrates that anything that we formulate as referring to the supernal beings and events are projections of human characteristics and situations elevated to the highest level of imagined perfection as Thomas himself admits: *Quidquid dicitur de Deo et creaturis eminentius convenit Deo quam creaturis.*²⁷

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES BEFORE SERVETUS

Servetus is known primarily for the results of his critical studies. One of these exhaustive studies of the scriptures demonstrated that there is no basis for maintaining the traditional trinitarian doctrine.²⁸ One has to recognize, however, that the problem of the Trinity was never resolved in a satisfactory manner. In spite of many decrees promulgated by the councils of the church, the theologians and philosophers still were striving to demonstrate its existence. In the Middle Ages, three scholastic schools dealing with the issue developed. They were prepared to confront a new opposition in the form of Islam, which was ideologically allied with Judaism.

The First School is usually classified as an illustrative, and it originated with Augustine. He asserted that, though the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be demonstrated, at least it could be illustrated. Augustine affirmed that the doctrine can be known through the revelation but not directly; it can be deduced only from the scriptures. It could be illustrated by analogy to the human constitution. For this purpose, he developed a series of similitudes or analogies, three of which are most frequently cited, namely, a similitude of the loved one, of the lover and of love; a similitude of the mind, of love and of knowledge; and a similitude of memory, of intellect, and of will. He treated such a psychological interpretation of the Trinity as a proof, because he considered the internal human constitution as an image of God (*imago Dei*). This approach was continued by Boethius, Lombard, Anselm, Albert the Great, Thomas of Aquinas, and Scotus.

The Second School, the demonstrative, was begun with Richard of Saint Victor (d. 1173), and it asserted that this doctrine could also be demonstrated.

²⁷ Ibid., 1a.30, 3 (20).

²⁸ Miguel Servet, *De Trinitatis erroribus, libri septem. Per Michaelem Serveto, alias Reves ab Aragonia Hispanum*, Anno M.D. XXXI (Hagueau, 1531); Miguel Servet, *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri duo. De Iustitia regni Christi, capitula quatuor. per Michaelem Serveto, alias Reves, ab Aragonia Hispanum* (Hagueau, 1532); Miguel Servet, "Cinco libros de declaración sobre Jesús el Cristo hijo de Dios (Manuscrito de Stuttgart)," in Miguel Servet, *Obras Completas* (Zaragoza: Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza, 2004), vol. II, tome I, pp. 1–113 (text in Spanish translation), tome 2, pp. 534–625 (text in original Latin).

The basis for such an interpretation was grounded in the metaphysics that considered God as a dynamic being (*Bonum diffusivum sui*), a position similar to the Hellenistic Neoplatonic views that considered God as diversified within its own being.

The Third School, the fideist, began with William of Ockham (1280–1349), who denied that the doctrine could be neither illustrated nor demonstrated. He postulated that the doctrine could be believed only by the authority of the church. He represented the school that was known at his time as being supported by the modernists who took a nominalist philosophical position. Accordingly, the existence of the universals was denied, and the reality was considered as composed of unrelated particulars. Thus, if one retains the concept of a substance that unites the three persons, then it represents a fourth entity, and the Trinity becomes a quaternary being, which was postulated by Joaquin of Fiore (1132–1202). If, however, the three persons are not united by one substance, then they constitute three distinct and separate entities, thus representing tritheism. Neither the concept of “relation” identified by Thomas Aquinas with the substance nor the concept of “person” would constitute the “universal” that would unite these three entities. From the philosophical point of view, Ockham asserted that there are three absolutes:

Because the syllogism: God is the Trinity, the Father is God, and thus the Father is the Trinity, is solid in accordance with the Aristotelian logic, but it is false from the point of view of the faith.

And,

The diverse scientific (*scientiis*) disciplines are not able to establish that God is One and Three. This can only be asserted in theology through the faith.

The other member of the school of the modernists, Pierre D'Ailly (1350–1420), admitted on the basis of the decrees issued by the councils that certain decisions of the church do not derive from the deductions made from the scriptures but from a special revelation offered to the Catholics by a special gift of God. He affirmed that the doctrine of the Trinity presents only a verbal inconsistency and not the real one. Thus, we could say that personaliter there are three gods, but at the same time he asserts:

Such an expression, though true and proper among the experts, is not, however, customary and should be avoided for the benefit of the simple believers.²⁹

The affirmations of D'Ailly were repeated by John Majors (1469–1550) and by Erasmus: “In accordance with the dialectic logic it is possible to say

²⁹ Roland Bainton, “Michael Servetus and the Trinitarian Speculation of the Middle Ages,” in *Autour de Michel Servet et de Sébastien Castellion*, edited by B. Becker (New York: H. D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1953).

that there are three gods, but to announce it to the inexpert, would offend them much.”³⁰

DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS IN HISTORY

Servetus read all the available ancient and contemporary literature and refined the skepticism of the fideist school, but he did not accept the authority of the institution of the church in defining the faith. Though he embraced the empirical epistemology, his destruction of the orthodox point of view was based on the biblical arguments and not on the philosophical analysis. Roland Bainton in his magisterial essay reconstitutes the train of thought of Servetus in this way:

Was then this doctrine [the doctrine of the Trinity] which must be accepted under the penalty of banishment or death really true and essential to the Christian faith? Preoccupied with this question, Servetus examined the New Testament and was enormously surprised upon discovery that this principle so rigorously required and repeated so obstinately really did not appear in the Holy Scriptures... The major part of this formulation was the work of the Council of Nicaea which openly admitted that the doctrine implied in the Scriptures cannot be expressed without doubt in biblical terms. Servetus remained convinced that nothing should be considered essential for the Christian faith that was not in the scriptures.³¹

Servetus developed his own doctrine of divine manifestations. This doctrine can also be traced to the analysis of the scripture in the light of the Neoplatonic point of view represented by Galenism and using the concept of the substance. Let me explain this point of view in more detail because it has implication for Servetus’s entire theology. Servetus always tries to explain all the processes and spiritual or noetic phenomena through the physical processes that involve the underlying substances. I can trace an analogy to the declaration of the pope in 1996, which states that evolution is a natural phenomenon though it contradicts the word of the scripture. The biblical description of the formation of the world, in addition to recognizing God as the creator, represented the natural philosophy of the current epoch. The pope felt obligated to make this gesture because today he adopted the results of contemporary science, and one cannot oppose any longer the scientific worldview. He, nevertheless, recognizing God as the creator, does not accept the modern concept of the “soul” and sticks to the old Egyptian, Orphic, and Platonic concepts. In a similar way, Servetus, accepting the Galenic

³⁰ Latin version is found in *Opus Epistolarum Des Erasmi Roterodami*, reedited and revised by P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen (Oxonii in Typographeo Clarendomiano, 1924); English version in Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1976), vol. IX, 1217.

³¹ Roland H. Bainton, *The Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus, 1511–1553* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953), pp. 29–46.

system as the explanation of the natural processes combined the Middle and Neoplatonic ideas with the Hebrew ideas concerning the divinity and postulated a progressive historical interpretation of the terms found in the scriptures. In this way, the Trinity becomes a true manifestation of the essence of God, first in the Word, which is understood literally in the Hebrew sense of the expression as God's pronouncement and in the Hellenistic sense as the essence of God; then in the human Jesus, the natural son of God; and finally, after the resurrection of Jesus, in the Spirit, which is nothing other than the way in which God communicates with humanity. The Son of God and the Spirit are the two substantive modes of divine manifestation in the historical context, in the body of Christ in the external form and internally in the Spirit. These diverse forms of the divine manifestation, according to Servetus, occurred in the context of human history and were revealed through the names of God, the various forms of visions and voices, and finally in the corporeal manifestation of God. Servetus thus can be considered a precursor of the modern process theology.³²

THE TRINITY AND MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

Modern theologians come finally to acknowledge that there is nothing in the New Testament writings that would warrant discussion about the divinity of Jesus or his preexistence and the Trinity. In his 1972 exhaustive study, Edmund J. Fortman, a Catholic theologian, summarized it this way:

The formulation of this dogma was the most important theological achievement of the first five centuries of the Church ... yet this monumental dogma, celebrated in the liturgy by the recitation of the Nicene creed, seems to many even within the Church to be a museum piece, with little or no relevance to the crucial problems of contemporary life and thought. And to those outside the Church, the trinitarian dogma is a fine illustration of the absurd length to which theology has been carried, a bizarre formula of "sacred arithmetic."³³

Fortman's study was followed recently by that of yet another Catholic theologian, Karl-Joseph Kuschel, and by that of biblical Unitarians, Anthony

³² Michael Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio*, English translation: *The Restoration of Christianity: An English Translation of Christianismi restitutio (1553) by Michael Servetus (1511–1553)*, translated by Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar; Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), pp. 3–285; Marian Hillar, "Process Theology and Process Thought in the Writings of Michael Servetus," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference, October 24–27, 2002, San Antonio, Texas; Marian Hillar, "Process Theology and Process Thought in the Writings of Michael Servetus," *A Journal from the Radical Reformation: A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 31–38.

³³ Edmund J., Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia and London: Westminster of Philadelphia and Hutchinson of London, 1972).

F. Buzzard and Charles F. Hunting.³⁴ The prominent Catholic theologian Karl-Josef Kuschel states:

The New Testament does not know of pre-existence as a speculative theme. A pre-existence christology understood as an isolated, independent, atomized reflection on a divine being of Jesus Christ “in” or “alongside” God before the world, a sonship understood in metaphysical terms, is not the concern of the New Testament.

And he admits that the statement about preexistence is not direct revelation but a result of theological speculation.³⁵

Anthony Buzzard in his exhaustive analysis of the trinitarian question describes it in these words:

It appears that expert Trinitarian exegesis often weakens the attempt to base the Trinity on Scripture. There are no texts advanced in support of the Godhead which have not been assigned another interpretation by Trinitarians themselves.... It may be simpler to accept the shema of Israel and its belief in a unipersonal God.³⁶

This speculation was developed in the first three centuries and, though it is considered by the Christian Church leaders as the most important theological doctrine of Christianity, it has no relevance to the problems of human life and thought. It has no basis in the scriptures regarded as the foundation of the Christian religion. It is simply the best illustration of the absurdity of the theological deliberations. One can understand, however, why it was possible to develop such a bizarre doctrine if one follows the evolutionary pattern of the rise of the new religion.

Let us ponder now what theological speculation is. Father Ceslaus Velecky, one of the translators and commentators of Thomas Aquinas, states that theology is examining “ideas and words” about “what God told us about himself ... through prophets and apostles.” And he admits that if it were not for the disclosure in the scripture, the idea of “three Selves” of God “would never have occurred to us.”³⁷ But the “disclosure” or revelation never meant those things deduced from it by Thomas and all the whole rest of the post-Nicaean tradition. To understand the true meaning of the words and concepts used in the scriptures one has to consider the mentality of the people who wrote them and the ideological, worldview context of the epoch in which they appeared. Some of these topics were recently exhaustively studied, and we refer the reader to these studies.³⁸

³⁴ Anthony F. Buzzard and Charles F. Hunting, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound* (San Francisco: Christian Universities Press, 1999).

³⁵ Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Born before All Time? The Dispute over Christ's Origin*, translated by John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp. 491–492.

³⁶ Anthony F. Buzzard, “The Challenge Facing Trinitarianism Today,” *A Journal from the Radical Reformation: A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism* 3, no. 1 (1993): 23–44.

³⁷ In Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 6, *The Trinity*, appendix 1, p. 123.

³⁸ Buzzard, “The Challenge Facing Trinitarianism Today”; Kuschel, *Born before All Time? The Dispute over Christ's Origin*.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE ROLE OF TERTULLIAN

With Tertullian, a major step in the evolution of Christianity was accomplished. He is the first who expressed the constitution of the divinity as a plurality of “dispositions” or “dispensations” within the unity of substance defined as a plurality of persons, which he termed the “Trinity” (*Trinitas*). There was no Christian trinitarian doctrine before him. Two basic orientations were developed, the “low Christology,” in which Christ was considered an ordinary man who was justified by progress in character and born of an intercourse of a man with Mary (represented in the thoughts of Jewish “Christians,” or rather, messianic Jews, the Ebionites),³⁹ and the so-called high Christology, in which Christ was considered divine though inferior in status to his Father. The Son and the Holy Spirit were assigned subordinate roles (Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen). Tertullian postulated one God, not a monad, but differentiated within himself: the Logos coming from God through an act of internal generation thus becoming the Son; and the Holy Spirit sent by the Father through the Son.

Tertullian’s Trinity was not yet the full-blown trinitarian doctrine that we observe for the first time in Augustine’s *De Trinitate* at the beginning of the fifth century. In addition, Tertullian established the Christian eschatological doctrine and that of original sin. We have seen how the Christian doctrines evolved from the original Hebrew religion through the process of assimilation of theological and religious-philosophical doctrines of the ancient peoples into a syncretic religion. Religious doctrines do not appear suddenly but, rather, undergo a stepwise evolutionary process of modification giving rise to new religions. Various triadic concepts led eventually to the trinitarian Christian concept first postulated in a formal theological treatise by Tertullian. Our search for the sources of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, it is important to emphasize, should be focused on the early formative years and stages of discussion before a fixed formula was approved in the fourth century after numerous debates, especially those between the Arians and Athanasians. In a study about the development of the doctrine of the Trinity entitled *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, its author belittles the influence of Greek philosophy but emphasizes the importance of the recognition of the full divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ These were the crucial steps that necessitated a new formula in order to satisfy the postulate of a relative monotheism or trinitarian monotheism.

³⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia kościelna. O męczennikach palestyńskich*, z greckiego tłumaczył Arkadiusz Lisiecki (Poznań: Fiszer i Majewski, 1924; reprint, Kraków: WAM, 1993), III.27; Robert M. Grant, *God and the One God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986).

⁴⁰ R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy*, 318–381 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988; reprint, Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), pp. 874–875.

There are doctrinal parallels in a number of pre-Christian theologies that are antecedents of trinitarianism. One may consider primarily three sources of the trinitarian doctrine. The Hebrew tradition, in spite of emphasizing the unity of God, contained elements that could be interpreted as triadic. These triadic elements had themselves a long history, which reflects influences from other cultures, such as the Babylonian, Persian, Egyptian, and Greek.⁴¹ The emphasis of the Hebrew religion on the divine influence or activity in the world and among humans gave impetus to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Philo of Alexandria fused the Platonic, Stoic, and Middle Platonic transcendental and abstract philosophical doctrines concerning the divinity and divine structure with the Hebrew biblical mythical tradition. Justin Martyr explained the mythical New Testament tradition in terms of the philosophical metaphysical concepts of Numenius of Apamea. Both these biblical traditions, one issuing from the other, offered a personal approach to God that was lacking in the abstract, impersonal analysis of the philosophers. Thus, both Philo of Alexandria and Numenius were the crucial figures in the development of the Logos Christological doctrine and theory of the triadic or dyadic structure of the divinity. Such views are absent from the Old and New Testaments; nevertheless, the Christian Church read these philosophical speculations into the biblical texts, as we have discussed in the chapters devoted to Philo of Alexandria and Justin Martyr.

Finally, there is the Egyptian tradition, where we find for the first time in the Mediterranean region the religious mythical concept of the tri-unity,⁴² thus operating an approach to God at a personal level. Tertullian combined this with Greek abstract thought into a trinitarian synthesis.

⁴¹ Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, revised and expanded edition (New York: Paulist Press, 1997); Peter Gerlitz, *Ausserchristliche Einflüsse auf die Entwicklung des christlichen Trinitätsdogmas, zugleich ein religions- und dogmengeschichtlicher Versuch zur Erklärung der Herkunft der Homousie* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963).

⁴² John Gwynn Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996); John Gwynn Griffiths, *The Divine Verdict* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991).

Appendix I

The Possible Sources for the Development of the Christian Trinitarian Concepts

THE POSSIBLE HEBREW TRADITION OF DIVINE PLURALITY

The Plurality of Gods and God's Appearances

The notion of a possible concept of divine plurality in the Hebrew tradition is important because the early Christian Apologists stressed the alleged presence of three divine entities in the Hebrew Bible. This reference to the Old Testament is one of the reasons for maintaining the continuity between Judaism and Christianity. The Catholic Church still maintains that the Trinity was revealed in the Old Testament, as it is claimed in the official church catechism.

And further, the catechism quotes Gregory of Nazianzus (born in Arianus in 325, briefly bishop of Sasima, coadjutor of the bishopric in Nazianzus, and briefly bishop of Constantinople, died in Arianus in 389) to demonstrate the Trinity:

The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit.¹

The religion of the ancient inhabitants of Palestine was not monotheistic. There are many references in the Hebrew Bible to many gods who were worshiped by the Israelites or by neighboring peoples. The Pentateuch and the Prophetic books constantly reprimand the Israelites to be faithful to their tribal and only God, Yahweh. Yet this God himself has traces of plurality that are remnants of a polytheistic past. It is enough to mention three cases of the plurality of God among the Hebrews:

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness." (Gen. 1:26)

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Faith with Modifications from the Editio Typica* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 237, 684; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio theol.*, in Migne, PG 36.5.26.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isa. 6:8)

Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech. (Gen. 11:7)²

Though Hebrew prophets recognized only one supreme God, Yahweh, as their God, whom they considered superior to all other gods (henotheism), they also accepted the existence of other gods for other nations.³

The real issue here is, however, whether divinity itself represented a plurality or a strict unity. Then Yahweh would be either a composite of several gods, an assembly of gods, or a name representing strictly one entity. We find traces of plurality of divinity in the name *'Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים). The word has a plural form, and as such, it refers in the Hebrew Bible to rulers and judges who are divine representatives or to a divine majesty and power, to superhuman beings, gods, angels, and to the sons of God or sons of gods. That it refers in its singular meaning to the supreme God of Israel, Yahweh, is generally accepted. Its origin is unknown but probably has Sumerian roots and is connected with the root *'El* meaning strength, power, might. Then the term would refer to the personalized creative powers that participated in the process of creation of the universe. This is reflected in the Genesis story of creation, which finds its origin in the Babylonian epic *Enūma elish* (*When Above*):

(Gen 1:1) בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

We find such views in the Sumerian cosmogonies and cosmologies where a pantheon of supernatural beings is called collectively *dingir*. The world originated from the preexisting cosmic ocean (*nammu*, personified by the goddess *Nammu*), “the mother who gave birth to heaven and earth” in the form of a united “heaven and earth” (*an-ki*). They were separated by the atmosphere, air, wind, or space (*lil*) located between them and personalized as the god *Enlil*.⁴ A similar picture is found in Egyptian cosmogony where the sky-goddess Nut representing heaven is supported by the air-god Shu, who has at his feet earth-god Geb.

Another aspect of the Sumerian myth is the role ascribed to the divine word through which the divinity was able to act. The biblical myth of the creation is a copy of the Mesopotamian myth with some modifications.⁵ The Hebrews,

² All quotes from the Old Testament or from the New Testament are from the text of the New Revised Standard Version software: *BibleWorks 4.0* (Big Fork, MT: Hermeneutika Bible Research Software).

³ Max Müller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion: As Illustrated by the Religions of India* (London: Longmans, Green, 1878).

⁴ Pierre Grimal, ed., *Larousse World of Mythology* (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1969), p. 58; Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

⁵ Samuel Noah Kramer, *Historia zaczyna się w Sumerze*, translated by Joanna Olkiewicz (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1961), pp. 108–137; James B. Pritchard,

however, put emphasis on the unity of God expressed in the well-known liturgical statement in Deuteronomy 6:4:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Yahweh] is our God [Elohim], the LORD [Yahweh] alone.

שמע ישראל יהוה אחד יהוה אחד יהוה אחד:

In spite of the emphasis on the oneness of God, this statement demonstrates that Yahweh was identified with the assembly of gods, אֱלֹהֵינוּ (our gods), or divine figures from the polytheistic period of Jewish religion. The same is true for other biblical statements:

I am the LORD your God, [אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ] ...

you shall have no other gods [אֱלֹהִים] before me (Exod. 20:2–5).

You shall not revile God[s], [אֱלֹהִים], or curse a leader of your people. (Exod. 22:28)

The LORD, God of gods! The LORD, God of gods! He knows;

[אֵל אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה אֵל אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה הוּא יֵדַע] (Josh. 22:22)

The king said to her, “Have no fear; what do you see?”

The woman said to Saul, “I see divine beings [אֱלֹהִים],

coming up out of the ground.” (1 Sam. 28:13)

There are other statements in the biblical texts that were interpreted by the church fathers and still are considered by trinitarian Christians as indicative of the presence of the Persons of the Trinity, such as the visit of the three men to Abraham representing Yahweh in Genesis 18:1–16 or angels visiting Lot in Genesis 19:1, 15. God also sends angels as his messengers in 1 Chronicles 21:15. Philo of Alexandria, under the influence of Middle Platonic philosophy, saw in Abraham’s visitors a triple vision of a single God; Justin Martyr saw in them two angels and Christ. Augustine saw the Trinity in Abraham’s visitors, in Lot’s the Son and the Trinity.⁶ These observations, however, reflect only a tendency to read into the ancient texts more recent religious or philosophical doctrines.

God’s Pronouncements and Utterances

God’s pronouncements and utterances were interpreted as demonstrating plurality within divinity (Gen 1:3: “Then God said”; Ps. 33:6: “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made”; Wis. 18:15: “Your all-powerful word leaped from heaven”; Hosea 6:5: “I have killed them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light”; Jer. 23:29: “Is not my word like fire, says the LORD”), and God’s “word” would be personified or hypostatized.

ed., *The Ancient Near East*, vol. 1, *An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 31–80; Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*.

⁶ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* LVI; Augustine, *De Trinitate* 2.19–22.

The use of the “word” in all these cases is either metaphorical or literal, and there is no clear personification. We find similar situations where speech of the divinity is the agent of action in Sumerian stories and in Egyptian texts of the so-called *Memphite Theology of Creation*, where the god Ptah creates the world by his word (*logos*) and his speech becomes a separate being transmitting the power of Ptah to all other gods and communicating life to all living things:

There came into being as the heart and there came into being as the tongue (something) in the form of Atum. The mighty Great One is Ptah, who transmitted *life* [to all gods], as well as (to) their *ka's*,⁷ through this heart, by which Horus became Ptah, and through this tongue, by which Thoth became Ptah. (Thus) It happened that the heart and tongue gained control over [every] (other) member of the body, by teaching that he is in every body and in every mouth of all gods, all men, (all) cattle, all creeping things, and (everything) that lives, by thinking and commanding everything that he wishes.⁸

Here the gods Horus and Thoth represent organs of thought, mind, and speech of Ptah, the supreme One God who conceives the elements of the universe by his “thought” and brings them out by his “word.”

The Greeks, as we have seen, had the concept of *Logos* as the active component of the universe, making it alive. By the time of Philo of Alexandria, it became at times a personified power of God but not God himself; in the Gospel of John, *Logos* is presumably represented by the human person of Jesus, and Justin Martyr, following Numenius of Apamea, explicitly identified it with Jesus and made him a “second God.”

The Concept of Wisdom

The concept of wisdom as an attribute of divinity may lead to its perception as a multiplicity. Wisdom is represented in the Old Testament as procreated, as a daughter of God created at the beginning of his work, before the beginning of the earth (Prov. 8:22–23); or as a personification of human wisdom, truth, justice, rule, and order:

Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold.... I have good advice and sound wisdom; I have insight, I have strength. By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; ... I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me. (Prov. 8:10–17)

⁷ *Ka* designates the force of conscious life in men, gods, and *akhs* (or deceased persons whose *ba*, that is, nonphysical personality or modern soul, united with the *ka* into *akh* in order to make possible for them eternal life; *akh* is described in the *Pyramid Texts* as “imperishable”). *Ka* is transmitted by the creator to the world, by the king to the people and by fathers to their children.

⁸ Though the documents date from 700 B.C.E. the original text was created during the First Dynasty. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, vol. I, p. I.

Wisdom stood by God during his work of creation:

Then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always. (Prov. 8:30)

The book of Proverbs is an ancient collection of various teachings from ancient sources. It is suggested that the sources of the concept of wisdom or the Law could be found in the ancient Egyptian goddess Maāt who personified Truth, Justice, Law, or Cosmic and Moral Order as an escort of the cosmic god of the sun, the god Re. She was also regarded metaphorically as the “daughter of the god Re,” the “eye of Re,” “lady of heaven, queen of the earth, and mistress of the Underworld.”⁹

We find in the Egyptian *Pyramid Texts* and in the *Book of the Dead* Maāt standing with the god Thoth next to the sun-god Re. Maāt and Thoth existed with Re when he sprang from the abyss of Nu (the primeval ocean) thus they were coeval with him. Thoth was considered the self-created, unbegotten, god “One.” He was the “heart of Re,” that is, his mind, reason, and understanding, and his tongue, “lord of divine words,” “lord of the words of god.” He spoke the word, which resulted in the creation of heaven and earth. He made calculations regarding maintaining heaven and the stars. He spoke the words that enabled Isis to bring back to life the dead body of Osiris and later of Horus, and to beget a child by Osiris without physical contact. He possessed unlimited power in the underworld. He was master of physical and moral law, had knowledge of “divine speech” (word). He was “judge of the two combatant gods” (as we find in Egyptian mythology a fight between the god of light [Horus] and the god of darkness [Set]), thus he maintained equilibrium between day and night, or good and evil. He performed funeral works by which the deceased acquires everlasting life. The ancient Greeks identified him with Hermes because of his wisdom and learning.

They described him as the inventor of astronomy and astrology, the science of numbers and mathematics, geometry and land surveying, medicine and botany; he was the first to found a system of theology, and to organize a centralized government in the country; he established the worship of gods, and made rules concerning the times and nature of their sacrifices....

He was reported to have written forty-two so-called Books of Thoth. He was called “Thrice great” and hence the epithet “Trismegistos” was derived.¹⁰ Thoth represented the highest idea of deity and personification of the divine mind in Egyptian thought.

⁹ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians or Studies in the Egyptian Mythology* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), vol. I, *Maāt*, pp. 416–421.

¹⁰ R. O. Faulkner, trans., *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910; reprint, Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing’s Rare Reprints, no date); Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. I, *Thoth*, pp. 400–415; E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (New York: Dover Publications, 1967, reprint of 1895 edition).

The goddess Maāt, closely associated with Thoth, was his feminine counterpart. The term *maāt* indicates primarily something “that is straight,” for example, a tool or instrument. Metaphorically it was associated with a rule, or law, or canon by which lives of men were governed; thus it meant right, true, upright, righteous, just. Goddess Maāt was thus a personification of physical and moral law and order. With the sun-god Re she represented the regularity of sunrise and sunset. As a moral power she was the lady of the Judgment Hall with forty-two judges and the personification of justice. She represented the highest conception of physical and moral law and order in Egyptian ideology. As such, she could be a model for Jewish Law, the Torah.¹¹

In the Greek Wisdom of Solomon dating from the second century B.C.E., wisdom (*Sophia*) is considered a power affecting the author (Wis. 7:7) and teaching him (Wis. 7:22). She is praised for her qualities:

There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, mobile, clear, unpolluted, distinct, invulnerable, loving the good, keen, irresistible, beneficent, humane, steadfast, sure, free from anxiety, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits that are intelligent, pure, and altogether subtle.... For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty. (Wis. 7:21–30)

In the Wisdom of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), also dating from the second century B.C.E., Wisdom is represented as part of the assembly of God, that is, of the beings residing with God:

I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist. I dwelt in the highest heavens, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud. (Sir. 24:2–4)

In the Greek Wisdom of Solomon and Wisdom of Sirach written during the time of the Hellenistic influence on the Jews, Wisdom may be modeled on the figure of the Egyptian goddess Isis, the greatest of goddesses. She was the personification of feminine creative power; she was a faithful and loving wife and mother; she was the “mother of God” or “God-mother,” and hers was a virgin birth; Isis united in herself all the attributes of all the goddesses of Egypt. She was reported by Plutarch (ca. 120 B.C.E.) to be the goddess of wisdom.¹² In the *Book of the Dead*, Isis is reported to have “knowledge how to use” her mouth.¹³ She was venerated in Rome in the second century C.E. as “queen of the heavens.”¹⁴ The praise of Wisdom found in Sirach 23:1–34 certainly reflects

¹¹ Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. I, pp. 416–421.

¹² Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, edited with introduction, translation, and commentary by John Gwynn Griffiths (Cambridge: University of Wales Press, 1970).

¹³ Ibid., 2.351; Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. II, *Isis*, pp. 202–221.

¹⁴ Lucius Apuleius of Madaura, *The Transformation of Lucius Otherwise Known as the Golden Ass*, translated by Robert Graves (New York: Noonday Press, 1998), bk. XVII, *The Goddess Isis Intervenes*, p. 262.

the hymns to Isis found in Egyptian literature, for example, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae*, published by Louis Vico Zabkar, which derive from the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (r. 284–264 B.C.E.):

I am Isis, the mistress of every land ...
 I gave and ordained laws for men, which no one is able to change ...
 I am she who finds fruits for men ...
 I divided the earth from heaven ...
 I showed the paths of the stars,
 I ordered the course of the sun and the moon ...
 I made strong the right ...
 I broke down the governments of tyrants.
 I made an end to murders ...
 I ordained that the true should be thought good ...
 With me the right prevails ...

We find also the concept of Wisdom, *Sophia*, in Gnostic literature.¹⁵ Certainly she is a model for the Christian Gospel myth.

Moreover, there are many other congruencies with the Christian story: the doctrine of the virgin birth was widely spread in Egypt in connection with the goddess Neith; the conception of Horus by Isis through the power of Thoth, who represented the Intelligence and Mind (Logos) of the God of the universe; the resurrection of the body to everlasting life; the theology of divine incarnation in the God-King.¹⁶ Undoubtedly, Jewish and Christian writings were inspired by and modeled their own stories on the whole constellation of doctrines, views, beliefs, and stories that were circulating and well known in the Hellenistic milieu of the last centuries B.C.E. and the first centuries C.E., discussion of which is beyond the scope of this work.

Neither Wisdom nor Word in the Hebrew tradition, before the Christian era, constitutes a triad. They do not contribute to the idea of the plurality of God because they represent aspects or attributes of God, though they are sometimes treated as personifications.

The Concept of *Ruach* (רוּחַ)

In the Hebrew scripture we find the term *ruach*, which in its original meaning designates “wind,” “breath.” It is derived from the Hebrew verb meaning “to blow” or “to breathe” and is associated with “breath of life.” Therefore

¹⁵ Louis V. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988). Gnostic literature on Sophia in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 3rd rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

¹⁶ Peter Gerlitz, *Ausserchristliche Einflüsse auf die Entwicklung des christlichen Trinitätsdogmas, zugleich ein religions- und dogmengeschichtlicher Versuch zur Erklärung der Herkunft der Homousie* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963).

it is translated often in the Septuagint into the Greek *anemos* (ἀνεμος), *pnoē* (πνοή), or *psychē* (Ψυχή). Another common translation, however, is into *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), that is, spirit as “Spirit of God” (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים) or “Holy Spirit.” In the Hebrew culture this term reflected God’s presence and God’s activity as illustrated in many passages:

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit [רוּחַ קְדֹשׁךָ] from me. (Ps. 51:11)

Where can I go from your spirit [מְרוּחֲךָ]? Or where can I flee from your presence? (Ps. 139:7)

But they rebelled and grieved his holy spirit [אֶת־רוּחַ קְדֹשׁוֹ].
(Isa. 63:10)

The term implies also, as its Greek equivalent, disposition, inspiration, as “prophetic inspiration.” It can be identified with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge:

I learned both what is secret and what is manifest, for wisdom [σοφία] the fashioner of all things, taught me. There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy [πνεῦμα νοερόν ἅγιον]. (Wis. 7:21–22)

It was believed in late Judaism that the spirit of prophecy had been extinguished. However, the spirit of God is constantly invoked in the New Testament and has a direct connection with the Old Testament concept. We find in Acts 2:17–21 such a statement referring to Joel 2:28–32:

Now, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.... Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

THE EGYPTIAN SOURCE OF THE CONCEPT OF THE TRIUNE GOD

Egyptian Deities: Personification of Natural Forces and Objects, Deification of the Pharaoh

Egypt belongs to the countries with the oldest cultures, the dominating aspect of which was religion. The monuments in Egypt and their splendor attest to the importance given to the worship of gods, funeral services, and the expectations of life after death. Their beliefs developed very early in predynastic times (ca. 4000–ca. 3000 B.C.E.) and continued throughout the history of Egypt with modifications until the time of the Ptolemies and Romans. Egyptians believed that they were a nation created by the One God who created the universe and other gods who ruled on earth. To the Egyptians, god was a being that was born and died like a human being, but is resurrected, is corporeal and

endowed with passions, virtues, and vices.¹⁷ However, beneath the rich imagery of the Egyptian myths lies a serious and profound interest in the origin and constitution of the universe and our place in it. Religious narrative was only an expression of these interests. For explicit philosophical speculation, we would have to wait until the time of the Greeks.

The earthly gods controlling the phenomena on earth very early in the history of Egypt ceased to rule in person and their divine attributes were given to the king, who ruled in their stead. Thus, in the Egyptian tradition three stages in the king's life could be differentiated: his natural birth, his birth to life as a king (coronation), his birth to life after death when his divine portion returned to the adobe of gods and was worshiped by men. This return was accomplished through certain funeral ceremonies and festivities. Such views are the foundation for the origin of the legend of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.¹⁸ In turn, these stories may have been an indirect source for Christian stories about Jesus' birth and interpretation of Mary as the "Mother of God." The transition from the old Egyptian religion to Christianity was easy, especially because the Egyptian moral system was very similar to that of the Christians.

Egyptians worshiped a large number of beings that personified either the celestial bodies or various natural powers, natural elements, and phenomena whose worship was necessary in order to gain their favorable attitude toward men. They often resided in animals, especially those that were feared, hence the cult of animals in ancient Egypt. But they worshiped not animals but gods who were represented by these animals. Among the most feared were the snakes. The *Pyramid Texts of Unis* begins with a series of spells against snakes and scorpions.¹⁹ Probably originally in Neolithic times animals were venerated as animals, but later in the dynastic times they were venerated as the abodes of those powers or deities.

These beings were real creatures to the minds of average Egyptians with characteristics of human beings, with the same passions, feelings, and moral reactions. The terms used by Egyptians for those higher beings were *neteru*, which we translate as gods, and *neterit*, for goddesses. But the same term in the singular, *neter*, and *netert*, was used for the one God or Goddess. We can only speculate about the origin of the word *neter* and its earliest signification. It seems that the word *neter* may signify "mighty," "strong," similar to the meaning of the Hebrew term *El* used for God. In the Coptic language, there is the word *nout*, which means "strong." By extension it acquired the meaning of "divine" or "god." But it also has the meaning in some texts of the idea of

¹⁷ An excellent account of the Egyptian gods is given by Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and Many*, translated by John Baines (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996; first German publication in 1971).

¹⁸ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973; reprint of 1911 edition), vols. 1, 2.

¹⁹ James P. Allen, trans., *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, edited by Peter Der Manuelian (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), pp. 17–18.

“self-existence,” “self-production,” and “renewal of life.” The term *neter* may mean a being with the power to generate life and maintain it.²⁰

Egyptian Monotheism

On monuments dated from the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties (ca. 2300 B.C.E.), the term *neter* refers to the great power or the Great God. For example, we find in the *Pyramid Texts of Unis*, representing the oldest inscriptions on the walls of the pyramids a statement such as this: “O Great God whose identity is unknown.”²¹ This unknown Great God was later in the Ramesside period (ca. 1230 B.C.E.) described with more precision:

The One who initiated existence on the first occasion, Amun, who developed in the beginning, whose origin is unknown. No god came into being prior to Him. No other god was with Him who could say what He looked like. He had no mother who created His name. He had no father to beget Him or to say: “This belongs to me.” Who formed his own egg. Power of secret birth, who created His (own) beauty. Most Divine God who came into being Alone. Every god came into being since He began Himself.²²

Nevertheless, we can surmise that at least among the educated and more critical Egyptians the idea of monotheism existed since the remote times, and we may conjecture that a small minority had an abstract concept of a unique, solitary, supreme God.

Such a theology we find especially in the Precepts of Kaqemna and Precepts of Ptah-hetep with a series of moral aphorisms similar to those found in the book of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, and the book of Proverbs, composed probably during the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties. The Precepts of Kaqemna make reference to a great and powerful being who rules the world and provides for people who obey him: “What is loved of God is obedience; disobedience hateth God.” The Precepts of Ptah-hetep refer to God’s design and plan defined as *sekher neter*, “Divine providence.” In the New Kingdom, we have a document entitled Precepts of Khensu-hetep, composed probably during the Eighteenth Dynasty, describing God as a righteous judge who is passing sentences according to the law. These precepts did encourage the worshiper:

In making offerings to thy God guard thou thyself against the things which he abominateth. O observe with thine eye his plans. Devote thyself to the adoration of

²⁰ Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. I, pp. 63–75.

²¹ Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, The Pyramid Texts of Unis, 165. Or in R. O. Faulkner, trans., *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910; reprint, Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, no date), Utterance 254: “O great god whose name is unknown.”

²² Wim van den Dungen, *Amun, the Great God: Hidden, One and Millions* (Antwerp: Holland, 2008), chap. 100, p. 41, <http://www.maat.sofiatopia.org/amun.htm>.

his name. It is he who gives souls to millions of forms, and he magnifieth whosoever magnifies him.²³

There is here a clear distinction between the supreme God and the earthly one that is identified with the sun-god. In other texts we have designations of various gods as One – for example, Ptah is called “One, maker of mortals, and of the company of gods”; Re-Atum is “lord of heaven, lord of earth, maker of beings celestial and of beings terrestrial, God One, who came into being in primeval time, maker of the world ... creator of rational beings”; Osiris is called “lord of the gods, God One.” The term “One” was systematically added to those gods who represented forms of the solar god, Re. Eventually, beginning with the Fifth Dynasty, Re was fused with the ancient primordial supreme God Amon and became the national God (Amun-Re or Amon-Re). Thus, Egyptians since primordial times had an idea of a supreme One God (*neter uā*), which could be first applied to Re, Horus or Atum.

Among these gods, Osiris occupies a special place. It seems that Osiris was worshiped from the predynastic period and was always associated with the doctrine of immortality. From the Fifth Dynasty he was regarded as the judge of the dead. Slowly between the Sixth and Eighteenth Dynasties, he acquires the attributes of the sun-god Re as Re-Osiris but still retains all his peculiar attributes. The priests of Thebes spread his worship, which they acquired from the priests of Heliopolis. His essence was that of the primeval god Nu and a great spirit and divine body in heaven. He established justice and law throughout the world, and he made the earth and everything that exists on it.

The special characteristic of Osiris was that he was partly human and partly divine. He possessed two natures, one divine and one human, and two bodies, two souls, and two spirits. His human body once lived on earth and was killed by his brother, Set. Isis, his feminine counterpart and his sister and wife, using the words she learned from the god Thoth, raised him from the dead. God Thoth was the personification of the intelligence of the company of gods. Risen Osiris passed into the realm of the underworld where he became judge and god of the dead, and by acquiring all the attributes of the sun-god, Re, he became the great One God. At the same time, priests used the same words and ceremonies that Thoth gave to Isis to raise the people from the dead. Later the Egyptians addressed their prayers directly to the Great God, Osiris himself, partly divine and partly human, who resurrected himself and gave everlasting life to his body. They believed that Osiris could give them eternal life by raising their bodies to be “born again.”

In the early stages of Osiris’s cult, he was weighing words of people to judge their deeds and reward or punish according to their merits. Later, as Papyrus of Ani illustrates this, the hearts of the deceased were weighed in front of the symbol of *maāt*, that is, the law and forty-two Assessors, probably representing

²³ Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. I, pp. 128–129.

the districts of Egypt. Still later in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties the Assessors are replaced by gods of the Great and Little companies. In both cases, Assessors or gods hear the confessions of the deceased and Osiris presides over all the other gods of Egypt.²⁴

This One and Great God existed together with a plethora of his various aspects, forms, images, and manifestations. Such a theology was expressed in popular polytheistic practices of piety (monuments, statues, and written texts). From the Nineteenth Dynasty (ca. 1308 B.C.E.) this monotheistic theology was expressed explicitly in the writings that are preserved today in the form of *Hymns to Amun*. Here the word *neteru* seems to acquire new meaning designating the creative attributes of Amun, the One and Great God. The other gods are his manifestations or transformations; thus they lose their autonomy.

The Eight²⁵ were Your first manifestation, until You completed these, You being Single. Secret was Your body among the elders, and You kept Yourself hidden as Amun, at the head of the gods. You made Your manifestations in Tatenen,²⁶ to accompany the primeval ones in Your first primeval time. Your beauty arose as the Bull of His Mother.²⁷ You withdrew as the one in the sky, enduring as Re.... All gods came into existence after You.²⁸

This supreme God is the divine substance, *paut*, that gave birth to other companies of inferior gods on earth and in heaven, and he created everything that exists on earth, and no other being existed with him. Thus, *paut* may be equivalent to the Hebrew *Elohim*.²⁹ In other cultures, the functions of Egyptian gods were performed by lesser divine beings, such as angels among Hebrews and Muslims. All evidence indicates that the Jewish angelology and demonology derived from the Egyptian sources.³⁰ This was not a radical monotheism but a compromise between monotheism and polytheism. This Egyptian monotheism is the oldest form of monotheism known to us.³¹

Other Theological Doctrines

By the combination of evil beings among them with the souls of evil men, Egyptians developed a concept of hell and punishment. By a similar process,

²⁴ Ibid., vol. I, pp. 148–155; vol. 2, pp. 113–194.

²⁵ Ogdoad was the primordial chaos or chaos-gods worshiped at Heliopolis.

²⁶ Tatenen was the primordial hill emerging out of Nun (oceanic abyss), a solid ground for the creator to step on. It was a material principle of creation.

²⁷ The bull is a metaphor for strength and fertility. Amun had no father, so he, metaphorically speaking, impregnated his mother himself for he formed himself.

²⁸ Hymns to Amun, in Dungen, *Amun, the Great God: Hidden*, chap. 80, p. 37.

²⁹ Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. I, pp. 132–134.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 6–7.

³¹ Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, translated by Ann E. Keep (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992; first published in 1960), pp. 149–150.

grouping beneficial and friendly beings with the souls of good men and women when Egyptians developed the doctrine of immortality, they conceived the concept of heaven and reward. The Egyptians were able to differentiate various classes of spirits and gods, with the cosmic or universal gods clearly differentiated from all others as, for example, the glory given to the sun-god who is preoccupied with cosmic events and contrasted with the man-god Osiris, who responds to the personal prayers of the Egyptians.

Egyptians also believed that their gods could intermarry with human beings and beget offspring as is described in other cultures (e.g., Gen. 6:1–5).³² These “sons of God” were originally the pharaohs who were resurrected after their earthly death. Later, however, the whole concept applied to all humans. The ancient Egyptians believed that each human being consists of a perishable material body and of two nonmaterial components they named *ka* and *ba*.³³ *Ka* is the life force of each individual, which comes ultimately from the creator and returns to the gods after death. *Ba* is an equivalent of the modern concept of the soul as personality. In order for an individual to survive after death, his *ka* and his *ba*, which were separated at death, have to be reunited. The resultant nonmaterial being is called *akh* and it has eternal life not only on earth but also in the cosmic sphere inhabited by gods. The content of the so-called *Pyramid Texts*, that is, ancient spells and utterances that were written on the walls of the inner chambers of the ancient Egyptian pyramids, was to enable the deceased to become an *akh*, and hence these texts in Egyptian were called “*akh*-makers.” They were recited by the priests during the funeral rites and contained three major groups of spells: the Offering and Insignia Rituals, which accompanied preparation and presentation of a meal and of royal dress and regalia to the statue of the deceased; the Resurrection Ritual, which was designed to release the

³² Gen. 6:1–5: “When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. Then the LORD said, ‘My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years.’ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterward – when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.”

³³ *Ka* is transmitted by the creator to the world, by the king to the people (e.g., “Unis [the king] is in charge of *ka*’s”) and by fathers to their children. We read in the *Pyramid Text of Unis* at the moment of anointing the dead king: “You shall make it pleasant for him, wearing you; you shall *akhify* him, wearing you; you shall make him have control of his body; you shall put his ferocity in the eyes of all the *akhs* who shall look at him and everyone who hears his name as well.” And “You have come to your *ba*, Osiris, *ba* among the *akhs*, in control in his places, whom the Ennead tend in the Official’s Enclosure.” Unis in the end is declared Osiris and the “son of god”: “Sun Atum, your son has come to you. Elevate him to you, encircle him within your arms: he is your bodily son forever.” In another fragment the dead king Unis receives his *ka*: “Wash yourself, Unis, and part your mouth with Horus’s eye. You shall summon your *ka* – namely, Osiris – and he shall defend you from every wrath of the dead.” In Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, pp. 22, 23, 27, 34.

deceased spirit from its attachment to the body and to send it on its journey to join the gods; the Morning Ritual, which contained the spells for entering the sky.

This transition was done with the help of two forces, the sun and Osiris. The sun is the daily source of life. At dawn the rising sun was called “Beetle” from the word “to come into existence” or “evolve” and also the “Evolver” or Khepri, Kheprer, or Kheper. During the day the sun was identified with Horus, the god of the kingship; and at sunset he was Atum, the oldest of all gods. Osiris represented the force that was renewing the generations of living beings. He was envisioned as a mummy lying in the netherworld in the region through which the sun passes during the night. By merging the sun with Osiris’s body, the sun receives new power and Osiris is resurrected as the sun. By analogy to the sun, each person’s *ba* was reunited with its own Osiris, that is, its mummified body lying in the tomb, receiving power to become an *akh*.

The oldest text of the *Pyramid Texts* is the *Pyramid Texts of Unis*.³⁴ We read there:

The sky has grown cloudy, the stars obscured; the (sky’s) arc has quaked, the horizon’s bones shaken; and those who move have grown still, having seen Unis apparent and *ba* as god who lives on his fathers and feeds on his mothers.

Unis is the lord of jackal-like rapacity, whose (own) mother does not know his identity:

for Unis’s nobility is in the sky and his power in the Akhet,³⁵ like Atum, his father who bore him – and though he bore him, he is more powerful than he;

for Unis’s *kas* are about him, his guardian forces under his feet, his gods atop him, his uraei on his brow;

for Unis’s lead uraeus is on his forehead, *ba* when seen and *akh* for shooting fire; for Unis’s powers are on his torso.

Unis is the sky’s bull, with terrorizing in his heart, who lives on the evolution of every god, who eats their bowels when they have come from the Isle of Flame with their belly filled with magic....

Unis is lord of offering, who ties on the leash (of the sacrificial animal), who makes his own presentation of offerings.

Unis is one who eats people and lives on gods, one who has fetchers and sends off dispatches.³⁶

The pharaoh Unis is declared to be the son of Atum; he became stronger than his father; when he enters the sky as a god, sky, stars, and all creation

³⁴ Unis was the last king of the Fifth Dynasty (ca. 2333–2323 B.C.E.). But the text itself may be copied from still-older texts, the meaning of which may even be forgotten.

³⁵ *Akhet* was the place where the dead were becoming *akhs*. It was this part of Duat or Tuat (the netherland) lying between the center in which the sun unites with Osiris during the night and the visible horizon above where the sun is rising at dawn. In the *Pyramid Texts* it represents the antechamber of the pyramid.

³⁶ *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, The Pyramid Texts of Unis, 180a.

are stricken with fear; upon earth he was a mighty conqueror; those who were conquered by him are beneath him; he appears in heaven with his *kas*³⁷ and his gods (probably small figures of gods which were laid upon the bodies of the dead) upon him; he is led by a serpent guide; he is endowed with powers: “The sky will be given to Unis and the earth will be given to him, says Atum”; he is depicted as a bull who feeds on what is produced by the gods³⁸ and “eats their bowels when they have come from the Isle of Flame with their belly filled with magic.”³⁹ By eating gods, Unis also ate their words of power and their spirits, thus acquiring their attributes (“Unis is the one who eats their magic and swallows their *akhs*”). Next Unis appears as “the great one” and sits opposite the god Geb. He becomes the habitation of the divine power and the firstborn of the gods. This idea that by eating the flesh of animals or strong men and by drinking their blood one absorbs their nature and life was common among many primitive peoples and among the Egyptians in predynastic and dynastic times. These beliefs seem to be reflected with some modifications in the New Testament statements of Paul and later in the Gospels concerning drinking the blood of Jesus and eating his flesh.

The heart (*ab* or *beseke*) was the organ that was associated with the “power of words.” Unis seems to be able to judge his own actions, probably as Osiris; and we learn that he “eats men and lives on gods.”⁴⁰ Unis also absorbed the knowledge (or perception) (*saa*) of gods (“Unis’s privileges [or dignities] will not be taken away from him, for he has swallowed the perception [or intelligence or knowledge] of every god”). Unis is a part of the triad, “Unis is the third in his appearance (with Horus and the sun).”

³⁷ An ordinary man had only one *ka*, or “double,” whereas a king or a god possessed several *kas* or “doubles” and several *bas*.

³⁸ This mention of a bull reflects an old worship of the bull, which survived until Roman times in the mystery religion of Mithras. Allusion to the food of the bull refers to the green herbs, and the ancient Egyptians believed that every object was a habitation of a spirit or god. Eusebius confirms in his *Praeparatio evangelica* that the productions of the earth were consecrated, considered as gods, and worshiped. Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* I.10.

³⁹ This Isle of Fire refers probably to the region in the underworld (Tuat or Duat) where the dead were residing, just like Sheol of the Hebrews. “Magic” designates here the “words of power” (*hekau*), which was a magical protection by which gods preserved their existence. In the old times, Egyptians thought that for humans, in order to obtain immortality, it was necessary to eat the gods, and through this, one could obtain their words of power and their *kas*. But the composition of human beings was still more complex because Egyptians still distinguished the “spiritual body” (*sāhu*), which was the ethereal and intangible body that was supposed to grow from the dead body, preserving its form. It was itself animated by the so-called spiritual power (*sekhem*). Gods were composed of all these parts, but they possessed superhuman powers.

⁴⁰ The statement about eating men probably refers to the predynastic times when this was the practice of the victorious, who were not only appropriating the property of the conquered but also eating their dead enemies. Such practices did not exist in Egypt during the dynastic times.

All these beliefs of the Egyptians were not different from beliefs of other nations and tribes in the ancient world from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean region. The Egyptian religion evolved over thousands of years, but scribes in the temples preserved the beliefs that were often forgotten by the people, and such texts were considered sacred and had to be preserved. Moreover, many new texts were added to the old ones, and priests attempted to reconcile and fuse often-contradictory views.

Grouping of the Gods into Companies

During the Fifth Dynasty (ca. 2330 B.C.E.), priests of Heliopolis developed the idea of grouping the gods into three companies. The first was named the “Great” and the second one the “Little,” the third one remained nameless. The Egyptian name for the grouping is *paut*, meaning “dough cake,” or cake of bread, which forms part of the offerings made to the dead. Originally it may have designated the stuff of the group of gods or their substance or matter out of which the gods were made. Similarly the term *paut* was used to designate the primeval substance out of which the earth and heaven were formed as well. The term company of gods (*paut neteru*) was translated by Egyptologist H. Brugsch as meaning an Ennead and is in current usage. This was done because frequently (but not always) nine gods were assigned to this sign. For example, we read in the *Pyramid Texts of Unis* that Unis, the pharaoh, has come to his father Atum “that you may make this Unis rule the Nine and provide the Ennead (or, and that he may complete the company of gods).”⁴¹ Wallis Budge, on the basis of an analysis of the Papyrus of Ani, argued for the translation of the term as “substance” or “material” of the gods.⁴² Often it is associated with the word “primeval” or “first.”⁴³ Moreover, these groupings treated as Enneads contained more than nine gods. For example, the Great Ennead contains in the *Pyramid Texts of Unis* ten gods without the deceased.⁴⁴ Similarly, in the Little Ennead from the *Pyramid Texts of Unis* there are eleven gods.⁴⁵ Egyptologist

⁴¹ Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, The Pyramid Texts of Unis, 155.

⁴² In Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, we read: “Hail Tatunen (Ta-tenen = Ptah), One creator of mankind and of the substance of the gods of the south and of the north, of the west and of the east” (XV.6–7). In the same book Khepera, the creator of all things, is said to have a body that is made of both classes of matter: “Hail, Khepera in thy boat, the twofold company of the gods is thy body” (XVII.116).

⁴³ The deceased identifies himself with the divine substance: “I am the eldest and the first-born son of matter; my soul is the gods, who are the eternal souls. I am the creator of darkness who maketh his dwelling-place in the limits of the regions of heaven.” *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, LXXXV, appendix, pp. 7–8. And Khepera says: “I have brought myself into being together with Nu (primeval matter) in my name of Khepera. In their forms I have come into being in the likeness of Rā. I am the lord of light” (LXXXV.6–7).

⁴⁴ Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, The Pyramid Texts of Unis, 152: Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Isis, Seth, Nephthys, Thoth, Horus.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

M. Maspero gave an explanation of this phenomenon, arguing that admission of one god to the group automatically meant admission of all other gods who were associated with him.⁴⁶ It was suggested that the Great company of gods was the grouping of gods residing in heaven and the Little company, the grouping of gods who resided on earth. This was in accordance with the Egyptian cosmology in which heaven was a duplicate of earth. So, as there were gods of heaven and earth, there were gods of the underworld or Tuat (or Duat), who probably belonged to the third group of gods never specified in the Egyptian texts.

Grouping of gods into Enneads that could be designated in the original Egyptian language as groups (companies) of gods with the same divine substance or material can be corroborated by some texts. For example, in the *Pyramid Texts of Unis*, Unis is identified with the entire Ennead:

There is a Heliopolitan in Unis, god: your Heliopolitan is in Unis, god. There is a Heliopolitan in Unis, Sun: your Heliopolitan is in Unis, Sun.

The mother of Unis is a Heliopolitan, the father of Unis is a Heliopolitan, and Unis himself is a Heliopolitan, born in Heliopolis when the Sun was above the Dual Ennead and above the subjects, Nefertem⁴⁷ without peer, heir of his father, Geb.⁴⁸

The groupings of gods arose when the local priests were obligated to accept the theologies of the dominating priests of Heliopolis; they simply added gods of Heliopolis to their local gods and produced a combination of gods into new entities with combined names. Some of such entities remained a cluster of several gods, but in other cases they were fused into one unity – a trinity.

Triadic Groupings of Gods

Egypt has the oldest tradition of triadic groupings of divinities. John Gwyn Griffiths, a British Egyptologist,⁴⁹ in an exhaustive work collected all the triadic groupings in Egypt and various parts of the Mediterranean and Mesopotamian regions. He counted fifty-four sites with 115 triadic representations in the form of sculptures, statues, mural carvings, and drawings. The best known is the family-based triad of Osiris, Isis, and Horus (father, mother, and child), which was the prototype for the Gospel story.⁵⁰ But Egypt is the only country in the Mediterranean basin where we find an idea of the divine tri-unity,

⁴⁶ Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. I, pp. 85–90.

⁴⁷ Nefertem was a youthful god depicted as seated on a lotus flower. Often he was regarded as a youthful sun.

⁴⁸ Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, The Pyramid Texts of Unis, 212.

⁴⁹ John Gwyn Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), pp. 92–110.

⁵⁰ Lisa Ann Bargeman, *The Egyptian Origin of Christianity* (Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin Publishing, 2005), p. 54.

labeled by Hugo Gressmann as “trinitarian monotheism.”⁵¹ It was suggested by Siegfried Morenz, a prominent German Egyptologist, and before him by other Egyptologists, that Egypt has been the influence in the formulation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, in which the Godhead is believed to exist as a triune divine being.⁵² And such was the understanding of the trinity by Morenz. He was not concerned with the Trinity’s substance, which was considered in the Greek philosophical elaboration adopted by the Christian thinkers as we have seen in Justin Martyr and Tertullian. Morenz emphasizes the fact of fusion of three divine entities into one Godhead as a model for the tri-unity that is found in Tertullian:

In order to avoid any gross misunderstanding, we must at once emphasize that the substance [i.e., here, the main theme] of the Christian Trinity is, of course, Biblical: Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. The three are mentioned alongside one another in the New Testament, probably for liturgical reasons.⁵³ But one essential point is still lacking for the Trinity in the proper sense: the concept or notion of such a combination. Indeed, there is no sign as yet of an awareness of the problem of three-in-one, or of the complex theological prerequisites for this awareness, i.e. the attitudes of mind inculcated by a certain type of education and the existence of appropriate trends of thought.⁵⁴

The number three does not have any magic significance in the Egyptian tradition; it represents, however, plurality. So the earliest Egyptologists assumed that the source of the triadic representations was an idea of a natural family relationship: father, mother, and child, which developed into a variety of other triadic arrangements. The earliest triadic representations date to the fourth millennium B.C.E. and include a vase from El-Amah, near Abates, depicting a triad consisting of mother, father, and daughter.⁵⁵ They are supposed to represent the first divine triad. The most frequent type of triadic representations depict a mother (the goddess Hathor depicted as cow-goddess, the goddess of fertility and heaven) and son (the falcon-god Horus, the living pharaoh) and the son’s spouse or marriage, with the ruler acting as both son and lover of the goddess. This depiction comes from the original concept of the ruler as the son of the cow-goddess Hathor, goddess of fertility and heaven. Her name means “house above” and originally

⁵¹ Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, p. 229.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 284.

⁵³ 1 Cor. 12:4–6: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.” 2 Cor. 13:13: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” Matt. 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

⁵⁴ Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, pp. 255–256; Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, p. 228.

⁵⁵ Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, p. 14.

represented only that portion of the sky in which Horus, the oldest form of the sun-god Re, was brought forth. In the oldest theology dating to the archaic and predynastic times, Hathor was mother of Horus, the god of the sky and the kingship. It seems that from the Third Dynasty (ca. 2700 B.C.E.) Egyptians developed an idea of the sun not only as the celestial body but also as the great sun-god Re who throned in the sky. From the Fourth Dynasty, Egyptians developed their solar theology in which the king was considered a human being and, at the same time, the “son of Re,” who ruled on earth and who, in the afterlife, returned to his source. But the pharaoh was not in a filial relationship with the god Re. He was only a manifestation of Re, a status he acquired after the coronation. Just as a falcon, a bird of prey, watches over his territory, so the pharaoh ruled over his kingdom as the incarnate Horus.⁵⁶ He was also a unifier of the two parts of Egypt, the Upper and Lower. We read in the *Pyramid Texts of Unis*:

Art thou Horus, the son of Osiris? Art thou, O King, the eldest god, the son of Hathor? Art thou the seed of Geb [God of earth]?⁵⁷

Hathor was also a cow-goddess of the underworld (Amentet) and was designated as the “lady of the Holy Land.” She was the great mother of the world; she personified the creative power of nature and was worshiped all over Egypt. Later she was represented as a young female figure with vulture headdresses and identified with many other goddesses. The Greeks identified Hathor with their goddess Aphrodite.⁵⁸

From the Fifth Dynasty the sun-god Re became the active power of the world, surpassing Horus and the pharaoh. However, the latter was the sole mediator between the divine and human spheres offering truth and justice to his father Re. The divine king maintained creation and conquered the forces of darkness and destruction in the world. On earth, he was the incarnation of the divinity. In the afterlife, the pharaoh ascended to his father Re. Re is coalesced in Heliopolis with the primordial self-generating god Atum and Horus to form Re-Atum and Re-Harakhti (Re-Heru-khuti) (Re, “Horus of the Horizon”), and his cult became established in the entire country.

In Sais, a city in the eastern delta of the Nile, the main goddess was Neith. When the priests of Sais adopted the Heliopolis theological system, Neith became associated with the chief god of Heliopolis, Atum; thus, goddess Neith acquired attributes such as “great lady, the mother-goddess, the lady of heaven, the queen of the gods.” She also acquired attributes of the god Atum, “the great lady, who gave birth to Re, who brought forth in primeval times

⁵⁶ Dungen, *Amun, the Great God*, p. 809.

⁵⁷ Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Utterance 303; Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, *The Pyramid Texts of Unis*, 208.

⁵⁸ Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. I, pp. 428–438.

herself, never having been created.” In a similar way the goddess Hathor was treated in the city of Dendera.⁵⁹

The oldest form of Horus was Heru-Ur (or Haroeris, Horus the Elder), and he represented the Face of heaven, that is, the Face of the head of an otherwise unknown and invisible god by day. He had a twin, the god Set, who represented the Face of heaven by night. In later dynasties, Horus was identified with man and became the son of Isis. Another form of Horus was Heru-pa-Khart or Harpocrates, Horus the Younger. He was the son of a Horus god and goddess Rāt-tauit. He was depicted as a youth with a lock of hair on the right side of his head and usually wearing a triple crown with a feather and disks; he was a form of the rising Sun and represented his early rays.

The most important form of Horus was that of Heru-Behutet, god of Edfu, usually depicted with the head of a hawk carrying weapons in his hand. He is described as the power that dispels darkness and night. He created himself and renews his birth daily. In one of his aspects he was identified with Osiris, and Isis and Nephthys are said to help him to emerge from Nu, the abyss. The form of Heru-Behutet that was most appealing was the one in which he fought against the god of darkness, Set, as the god of good against the god of evil. In the predynastic descriptions, they fought without weapons, but in the later descriptions found on the walls of the temple of Edfu, Horus is armed with weapons of iron and is surrounded by *mesniu* or *mesnitū*, that is, the blacksmiths or metalworkers armed with spears and chains. Set and many other enemies of Horus and Re are defeated, and after the battle Set changed himself into a serpent and found a hole in the ground in which he is hiding. Then god Re said: “Let Horus, the son of Isis, set himself above his hole in the form of a pole on the top of which is the head of Horus, so that he may never again come forth therefrom.” The story is mythical but it may reflect some historical fact of invasion of some people who had a superiority of weapons. Their ruler was in later times identified with Horus, god of heaven at an earlier time, and subsequently with Re, still later.⁶⁰

Then we have Horus, who was the son of Isis and Osiris, who combined the attributes of all the other forms of Horus gods. But he represented the rising sun and the offspring of the dead man-god Osiris and his successor. He represented what not only all Egyptians but all people of the world wish to possess, that is, a renewed eternal life. Osiris represented the past, and Horus the present or future: “Osiris is yesterday, and Re (i.e., grown up Horus) is tomorrow.” According to the story Isis searched for the body of her dead brother-husband Osiris, and after finding it, she revived him and had a son with him. But she was persecuted by Set, who caused the death of Horus. Horus, however, was resurrected by the power of Thoth and began his fight with Set

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 92–93.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 466–486.

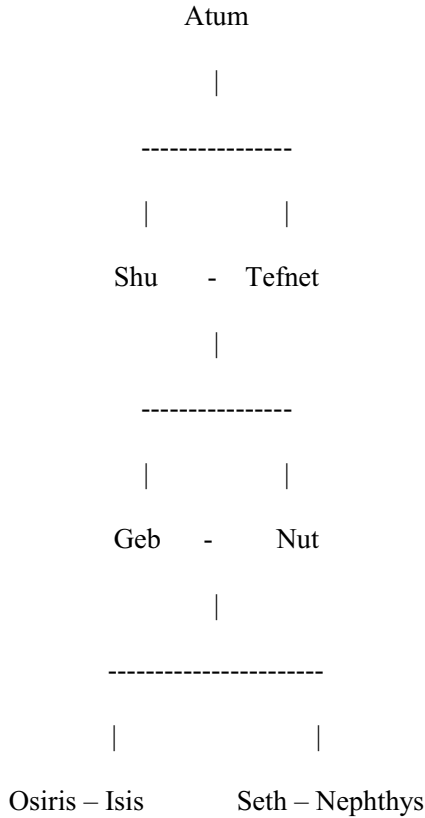
in order to avenge the death of his father. Isis then in some way supported Set, but Thoth, seeing this, took the head of the goddess, transformed it into the head of a cow, and put it on her body. In the end, Isis released Set from his chains, but Horus tore off the head of Isis the symbols of sovereignty. In the end, Horus succeeded to the throne of Osiris and reigned instead. He was triumphant and was given sovereignty over the world. Horus was also a god who helped the dead in the underworld as a mediator, pleading for them with the judges. In the Christian story, sovereignty over the world was given to the resurrected Christ. Stories of Horus fighting against his enemies were the prototype of later pre-Christian stories of dragons and of the Christian stories of Saint George.

Finally, there was Heru-pa-Khart, Horus the Child, the son and successor of Osiris. He became a type of new birth, a new life, the first hours of the day, the first days of the month, the first months of the year. Later the characteristics of the sun-god were added to him, and all these forms of Horus became interchangeable and also identified with other gods.

From the time of the pharaoh Amasis (ca. 526 B.C.E.), we observe a continuous immigration of Greeks and a stepwise assimilation of Greek culture by the Egyptian upper class. This cultural syncretism was especially strong in Alexandria and Fayum during the reign of the Ptolemies (332–30 B.C.E.). Greeks introduced their mystery religions with the concepts of renewal and rejuvenation during one's lifetime here on earth.

The oldest and certain triadic representation comes from the Old Kingdom (ca. 2780–2250 B.C.E.) in the form of a wall carving from the temple of Giza, in which the pharaoh Mycerinus is presented between the goddess Hathor and the nome-goddess. There are four more such representations of the triad of Mycerinus. Goddesses are depicted as human in form and represent the earliest sculptured figures of deities in the Old Kingdom. It is suggested that this triadic representation may indicate the identity of man with God, the presence of God in man, and a divine sanction of the Egyptian kingship. The goddess Hathor represents the celestial world and the nome-goddess represents the terrestrial world. The theme of such a triad is unity, and the king is the focus. Another representation is an Ennead like the Great Ennead of Heliopolis (found in the *Pyramid Texts*), a grouping of four marital pairs (Ogdoad) headed by Atum:⁶¹

⁶¹ *Atum* (also named as *Tem*, *Temu* or *Atem*) means literally *finished*, *complete*. He was the first god of the Ennead and represented the primordial source of all the elements of the world, the first god to exist in primeval matter. Originally he was the local god of Annu or Heliopolis. He was held to be one of the forms of the sun-god Re and personified the setting sun. In the predynastic period he was the first man among the Egyptians and was believed to have become divine, and at his death he was identified with the setting sun (the third manifestation of Re). Thus he was the first living man-god, just as Osiris was the first dead man-god. He was thus depicted in human form with human head wearing the crowns of the South and North, whereas a disk being rolled by a beetle depicted Re, and Khepera was represented by a beetle. Atum was a manifestation of god in human form and his

Appendix I

O you Great Ennead which is on Òn [Heliopolis], (namely) Atum, Shu, Tefnet, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys; O you children of Atum, extend his goodwill to his child in your name of Nine Bows. Let his back be turned from you toward Atum, that he may protect this King, that he may protect this pyramid of the King and protect this construction of his from all the gods and from all the dead and prevent any evil from happening against it forever.⁶²

conception marks the end of the period when Egyptians represented gods by animal forms. This was the beginning of the development of the idea of an unknowable God who was the maker of the universe. He was regarded as the father of the human race. From the Fifth Dynasty, priests fused Atum with Re, and Re-Atum (also Rā-Tem) became the national God. He was also identified with Osiris and with Horus. The Big Ennead represented the gods of Lower Egypt, whereas the Little (or Elder) Ennead represented the gods of Upper Egypt.

⁶² Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Utterance 600; also, Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, The Pyramid Texts of Pepi I, 582, p. 199.

Triune Divinities

Trinity as a Unity of Three Gods in One

Triads, according to the studies of Griffiths,⁶³ gained popularity in Egypt after the New Kingdom (1562–1308 B.C.E.), and they often represented the concept of tri-unity. One of the oldest and most developed examples is the trinity found in the papyri *Hymns to Amun* (now located in Leiden)⁶⁴ composed during the Ramesside period (1308–1085 B.C.E.), where it is stated:

All gods are three: Amun, Re, and Ptah, without their seconds. His identity is hidden as Amun, he is Re as face, his body is Ptah. Their towns are on earth, fixed for the span of eternity: Thebes, Heliopolis and Memphis are established perennially. When a message is sent from the sky, it is heard in Heliopolis, and repeated in Memphis for the god-with-the-beautiful-face,⁶⁵ put in a report, in Thoth's⁶⁶ writing, directed to the town of Amun, bearing their concerns, and the matter is answered in Thebes, by an oracle emerging, intended for the Ennead. Everything that comes from His mouth, the gods are bound by it, according to what has been decreed.... Life and death depend on Him for everyone, except for Him, Amun, together with Re, [and Ptah]: total, 3.⁶⁷

The trinitarian pattern is extended in this fragment to Egyptian geography, Thebes, Heliopolis, Memphis. All three gods, Amun, Re, Ptah, compose the trinity: its hidden identity or name is Amun; its face or presence is Re, the principle of light and life, that is, the sun; and Ptah, the third member of the trinity, is its body or manifestation. This name Ptah probably means “sculptor, engraver,” and he was the god of craftsmen. He was identified from the early dynasties to the period of the Ptolemies and Romans with one of the primeval gods who came into being in the earliest time, “the father of beginnings, and

⁶³ Griffiths states: “It is not until the New Kingdom that the triad achieved extensive popularity in Egypt. That it was also sometimes imbued with the triune concept cannot well be controverted.” *Triads and Trinity*, p. 255.

⁶⁴ Wim van den Dungen, *Amun, the Great God: Hidden One and Millions*. The papyrus was transcribed, edited, and discussed by A. H. Gardiner, “Hymns to Amon from a Leiden Papyrus,” *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* (Berlin), no. 42 (1906): 12–60. An exhaustive study of the text was published by J. Zandee, “De Hymnen aan Amon van Papyrus Leiden I-350,” *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* (Leiden: E. J. Brill), 28 (1947), plates I–VI, and A. Ermann, “Der Leidener Amonshymnus,” *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Leipzig, 1923), vol. 55. The most interesting fragments were translated into English by P. J. Allen, *Genesis in Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (New Haven, CT: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1988), pp. 49–55, and by J. Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995), chap. 5. There is also a French translation by A. Barucq and F. Daumas, *Hymnes et Prières de l'Égypte Ancienne* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980), pp. 208–229.

⁶⁵ This is the god Ptah.

⁶⁶ Thoth was the god of writing.

⁶⁷ Wim van den Dungen, *Amun, the Great God: Hidden One and Millions*, chap. 300, pp. 35–36, <http://www.sofiatopia.org/maat/amun.htm>.

creator of the egg of the Sun and Moon,” master architect and designer of the world involved in the construction of the heavens and the earth. It was believed that it was he who fashioned the new bodies in which the souls of the dead were to live in the underworld. He is usually depicted as a bearded man holding in his hands a scepter and an emblem of life.

One can draw parallels of the Egyptian Theban trinity with the later Christian triad and Trinity. There are similarities and differences; however, what is important is the intellectual mind frame created by the Egyptians that could have inspired philosophical metaphysical speculations as well as the interpretation of narratives and myths of other cultures. Such Egyptian ideas could have influenced the Platonic philosophers, leading to the triadic philosophical doctrines of Middle Platonism and the development of the Hellenistic salvation and mystery religions, on one hand, and to the triadic interpretation of the Hebrew narratives and myths, on the other hand.

Amun (or Amen) was the god worshiped since remote antiquity. He is mentioned in the *Pyramid Texts of Unis*, the last king of the Fifth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom (ca. 2353–2323 B.C.E.). In the New Kingdom (ca. 1562–1308), he became the patron of the entire empire with a short interval during the reign of Amenophis IV (Akhenaton) (r. 1361–1340), when his name was erased from the monuments. His cult reached a zenith during the Ramesside period (1308–1085) and survived until the times of the Ptolemies. During the New Kingdom period, nonroyals also acquired the right to participate in the ritual of becoming Osiris after death. Most likely, the short-lived episode of the monotheistic cult of Aten was the basis for the development of Mosaic monotheism among the Hebrews.

In the Theban context, the main triad was Amun–Mut–Khons, and it was changed into Osiris–Isis–Horus, indicating an increasing power of Osiris in the Ptolemaic era.

The god Amun (also Amen, Amûn, Amon) and his consort Amaunet (also Ament) are rarely mentioned in the *Pyramid Texts*. In the oldest *Pyramid Texts of Unis* (Fifth Dynasty, 2353–2323 B.C.E.), Amun is mentioned after the deities of Nu (Nau, Niu, Nun) and Undersky (Nen, Nēnet, Naunet) personifying the primeval water abyss from which all things sprang:

You have your bread-loaf, Nu and Undersky [Nun and Naunet], you pair of the gods, who joined the gods with their shadow;

You have your bread-loaf, Amun and Amaunet, you pair of the gods, who joined the gods with their shadow;

You have your bread-loaf, Atum and Dual Lion, who made their two gods and their body themselves – that is Shu and Tefnut, who made the gods, begot the gods and set the gods.

And in the *Pyramid Texts of Pepi I* (Sixth Dynasty, ca. 2289–2255 B.C.E.):

This emergence of yours from your house; Osiris Meryre, is Horus’s emergence in search of you, Osiris Pepi. Your envoys have gone, your runners have run, your

announcers have bustled, and they will say to the Sun that you have come, Pepi, as Geb's son, the one on the Amun's throne.⁶⁸

In the Coffin Texts, which replace the *Pyramid Texts* from the Eighth Dynasty, he is listed as "he whose name is hidden." His name is mentioned only once:

I am he in this name. Make way for me, that I may see Nun and Amun! I am that equipped spirit who passes by the (guards). They do not speak for fear of him whose name is hidden, who is in my body. I know him, I do not ignore him! I am equipped and effective in opening his portal.⁶⁹

From the Twelfth Dynasty, Amun is represented as the bull Min ("the bull of his mother"), a god who was assimilated by Amun.

The word "Amun" means "hidden," "what is not seen." Thus he was in the Old Kingdom the personification of the unknown creative power associated with the primeval abyss, Nun. Nun was a preexistent self-creative activity that has to be understood as a "negative existence," a certain passive principle of creation that creates and establishes itself in turn as the active potential or principle of creation, Atum, the "father of the gods" who creates itself and emerges *ex nihilo*. Amun was the Great God who existed before creation and was kept secret and revealed only to the higher initiates, that is, royalty, high priests, and high administrators. He was usually depicted as a bearded man who wears on his head a double plume (representing the two lands of Egypt) or a man with the head of a hawk. His sanctuary was built during the Twelfth Dynasty (Middle Kingdom, 2040–1730 B.C.E.) in Thebes. But the pharaohs also worshiped Ptah, the god of Memphis. As Thebes became the national capital and its princes the kings of Egypt, so Amun eventually acquired a privileged position and became a patron of the empire (Eighteenth Dynasty, New Kingdom, 1562–1308 B.C.E.) with a national temple in Karnak. The cult of Amun eventually was spread to the South and North of Egypt and to all the surrounding countries. His name was fused with that of Re, who now acquired prominence in the Egyptian pantheon as Amun-Re. Priests now developed a new solar theology, which searched for a new concept of the divine. His priests started to claim that he was not one of the great gods but that there was no other God like him ("Thou art One") and that he was the greatest of them all. Nevertheless other divinities still existed and were respected.

During the Amarna period (1361–1340 B.C.E.), pharaoh Amenophis IV (Akhenaten) brought to the logical conclusion the notion that there were "no other gods" and that they could not be tolerated. His message was not original but rather politicoreligious, implementing religious monotheism and closure of all other cults including eradication of the name of Amun. But the Amarna

⁶⁸ Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, W. 206, p. 55; P. 521, p. 184; Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Utterances, 301, 579.

⁶⁹ *Coffin Texts*, VII, 469–470, quoted in Dungen, *Amun, the Great God*, p. 20.

period provoked a crisis because personal conscience was considered of no importance. The netherworld was eliminated. The identity of the netherworld deity, Amun, was eradicated. Akhenaten reintroduced the deification of the pharaoh (ideas of the Old Kingdom). He was again the incarnated Re. He had subjected his people to his views and tolerated no opposition.

Amun's cult was afterward partially restored under Tutankhamun and reached his zenith during the Twenty-First Dynasty. After the last Ramsesses died the high priest of Amun-Re, Heri Hor, became the king of Egypt, initiating the Twenty-First Dynasty of priest-kings (ca. 1085–950 B.C.E.). The power of Amun was described in various hymns devoted to him. We read in one of them:

Thou art the chief of all of the gods, thou art the lord of Maât, and the father of the gods, and the creator of men and women, and the makers of animals, and the lord of things which exist.... O thou art the maker of things which are below and of things which are above.... When thou didst speak the word the gods sprang into being.... Thou art the Form of many forms....”

Amun-Re acquired all the attributes of the sun-god that were ever worshiped in Egypt. Amun-Re was identified with the great unknown God who created the universe. During the Ptolemaic period he acquires an attribute of the eternal.⁷⁰

The cult of Amun-Re survived until the time of the Ptolemies and served as inspiration for personal piety and new religiosity. Its characteristics were described by J. Assmann:

1. the emphasis on the oneness and hiddenness of the god; 2. the formula of the “one who makes himself into millions,” with all its variants; 3. the concept of the god dwelling in the world as ‘*ba*,’ image and body, who has created the world as earth, heaven, and underworld for these three constituent elements of his self; 4. the theory of the “life-giving elements,” i.e. the concept that god sustains and gives life to the world not only by these elements, but also as light, air and water; 5. the idea of all-pervasiveness in the form of air, as is expressed in the formula [“(Amun) enduring in all things”]; 6. the role of this god as god of time and fate in connection with his personal aspect as “ethical authority.”⁷¹

The most important aspect of Amun-Re is his oneness. Despite multiplicity and variety, he is One. The formula for multiplicity is expressed in the Leiden Papyrus:

The One alone, whose body are millions. “He is One before creation” because he is a primordial god, “existing” before existence; he is One during creation as sole creator; he is One after creation for he is “hidden” behind all other deities who are

⁷⁰ Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. II, pp. 1–41.

⁷¹ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom*, p. 133, quoted by Dungen, *Amun, the Great God*, p. 28.

his images, forms, and manifestations. He is “millions” in the polytheistic divine world of reality after creation but he did not cease to be One. He is the many in that mysterious way, hidden and present at the same time, which this theology is trying to grasp by means of the *ba* concept. A common text even goes so far as to describe god as the *ba* of gods and humans, that is, the “millions.” By linking the *ba* concept and the theology of the hidden, it becomes clear in what respect this formula goes beyond the traditional creation theology of the opposition between unity and plurality.... In the context of this hymn, the concept of “all that is” is then explained as the totality of living creation, from gods and humans to worms, fleas and mice.⁷²

Such ideas were picked up in Hermetic writings, by Hellenistic Neoplatonism, and later by Michael Servetus in the sixteenth century. Even today they are continued in the so-called Process Theology.⁷³

Among other concepts that were associated with the cult of Amun in the Middle Kingdom were the concepts of individuality and personality, and individual judgment in the afterlife. No longer the king, the pharaoh was the redeemer as it was claimed in the Old Kingdom. However, in both the Old Kingdom and the Middle Kingdom, the underlining principle was the permanence of the existence after death and the concept of an unchangeable order (*maāt*) (Greek *logos*), which had to be followed (public and/or personal).

By the New Kingdom, further changes occurred:

In Ramesside theology, the sacredness of Amun is no longer realized by this spatiotemporal segregation (his essence being pre-creational), this “temporal Beyond.” Instead, Amun-Re as creator is “*summum bonum*” and “*summum ens*” (first cause), *dwelling everywhere in his creation “behind” the screen of an infinite number of forms*. Amun-Re is ontologically segregated from all other deities and none of

⁷² Dungen, *Amun, the Great God*, p. 29.

⁷³ “God is in all things, as their root and the source of their being. There is nothing that has not a source; but the source itself springs from nothing but itself, if it is the source of all else. God then is like the unit of number. For the unit, being the source of all numbers, and the root of them all, contains every number within itself, and is contained by none of them; it generates every number, and is generated by no other number. Now everything that is generated is incomplete, and divisible, and subject to increase and decrease; but that which is complete is subject to none of these things.” *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*, English translation, introduction, and appendix by Walter Scott, forward by A. G. Gilbert (Melksham, Wiltshire: Solos Press, 1993), Libellus IV, A Discourse of Hermes to Tat, p. 63; Plotino, *Enneadi*, traduzione con testo Greco a fronte, introduzione, note e bibliografia di Giuseppe Faggin (Milano: Rusconi, 1996); Christopher A. Hoffman and Marian Hillar, trans., Alicia McNary Forsey, managing editor, *The Restoration of Christianity: An English Translation of Christianismi restituito (1553) by Michael Servetus (1511–1553)* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007); Marian Hillar, “Process Theology and Process Thought in the Writings of Michael Servetus,” *A Journal from the Radical Reformation: A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 31–38.

them knows his name. Like the subtle “logos” of the Stoics much later, Amun-Re is present in the invisible domains of creation.

Therefore, regarding the transcendence of Amun-Re, two aspects are distinguished:

- Precreational transcendence: Amun is primordial so that he spatiotemporally transcends the order or creation (this is the traditional line of thought, starting with Atum).
- Sacred transcendence: Amun-Re is the self-created “soul” (*Ba*) of creation, the *summum ens*, the supreme being. He is present *in* his creation as a sacred, hidden god, a supreme being, that transcends all other beings, because Amun is the all-pervasive sacred unity in all beings that remains hidden for his transformations (late Amun-Re theology or Amenism).

According to Wim van den Dungen,

Ramsesses II allowed the oracle of Amun-Re to guide him in the appointment of the god’s high priest, which made the step to a hereditary priesthood simple. At the end of the New Kingdom, Egypt had become a sacerdotal state ruled by Amun-Re of Thebes. Pharaoh had yielded his power to the head of the state church, whose high priest knew the will of Amun-Re.⁷⁴

Thus we find the following philosophical elements in the myths of the ancient Egyptian theology and religion:

1. An ontology of precreation in the form of an undifferentiated and inert ocean of potential energy exists before, during, and after creation ends; it is limitless, spaceless, and timeless and implicates order produced by the process of creation.
2. In the self-creation of the creator *ex nihilo*, he emerges as his own cause and splits into space, time, and the elements.
3. Creation is produced through “great speech,” “authoritative utterance,” “generative command,” and “divine words” in the mind and on the tongue of the creator.
4. Light becomes the metaphor for creation, just as darkness is the metaphor for precreation. The light of the disk of the sun is the cause of all forms of life on the surface of the earth. This image was first projected on the king and kingship, later attributed to Amun.⁷⁵

With Amun-Re is associated a form of sun-god known as Menthu (also Month, Montu). Menthu was probably an ancient local god in Thebes before Amun and personified the destructive heat force of the sun. He is mentioned in several *Pyramid Texts*; in the *Book of the Dead* he is described as the “soul and body

⁷⁴ Dungen, *Amun, the Great God*, p. 33.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 57–58.

of Re” and is usually depicted in the form of a man with the head of a hawk wearing a crown of the solar disk with uraeus⁷⁶ and two plumes. Elsewhere he is depicted as a bull, so that originally in predynastic times he may have been a personification of the strength of a raging bull.

The female counterpart of Amun-Re was Mut, whose name means “mother” and who was regarded as “world-mother.” She was represented by a female figure with the united crowns of the South and North. In other depictions she united in herself all the attributes of all the goddesses of the South and North, including Amaunet (Ament), the old female counterpart of Amun. She was one of the few goddesses who were declared to be “never born.”

The third member of the great triad of Thebes was Khensu (also Khons). He was an ancient moon-god whose cult preceded that of the sun-god. When the priests introduced Amun-Re as the national god, they made Khensu the son of Amun-Re and Mut. His name derives from the word meaning “to travel, to move about,” so he was a form of Thoth and was appropriately identified with the moon-god. Thus he was the messenger of the gods and traveler through the sky under the form of the moon. He was considered the “lord of Maāt,” the “moon by night”; just as the new moon, he was a fiery bull. In one form he was Khensu-pa-khart (Harpocrates) and, as such, caused the shining of the crescent moon and “through his agency women conceived, cattle became fertile, the germ grew in the egg ... he was the second great light in the heaven, and was the first great son of Amun.”⁷⁷ As a young sun-god he became the son of Isis, the “Bull of Amentet.” He was depicted as a man with the head of a hawk or of a man and usually wears a lunar disk with a crescent or solar disk with the plumes and a uraeus.

Apis, the god of Memphis represented by a bull, is one of the trinity of Osiris. Here the bull represents a mortal who became Osiris and an inscription in a Serapeum dated from the time of the Ramessides reads: “Osiris = Apis-Atum-Horus at the same time, the Great God.”⁷⁸

Another representative trinity is Ptah-Sokaris (Seker)-Osiris (Asar). This deity centered in Memphis representing the union of powers of the three gods was a symbol of the resurrection from the dead; thus, from the Twenty-Second Dynasty (ca. 950 B.C.E.), he was recognized as the “tri-une god of the resurrection.” He was depicted in various forms. In the usual form, he was a hawk with a white crown and plumes upon his head, standing on a pedestal from which projects a serpent. In another form, he is depicted as a human figure seated upon a throne with a crown. Behind him stand Isis and Nephthys, and before him there is the skin of the bull, the head of which was cut off and

⁷⁶ The Uraeus (plural Uraei or Uraeuses, from the Egyptian word meaning “rearing cobra”) is the stylized, upright form of an Egyptian spitting cobra, used as a symbol of royalty and divine authority in ancient Egypt.

⁷⁷ Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. II, p. 35.

⁷⁸ Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, p. 143.

with blood dripping into a bowl. On the side of the throne is perched a hawk, representing his son Horus. The title given to him is “Dweller in the secret place, great god ... king of eternity, governor of everlastingness.”⁷⁹ Certainly there is a connection between the symbolism of the bull depicted here and in the statutes of Mithras of the Roman period.

Seker or Sokaris was in the early dynasties a god of that portion of the underworld which was assigned to the souls of the inhabitants of Memphis so that he represented the power of darkness or of the night and was identified with the forms of the night sun. He was depicted as a hawk-headed man holding in his hands symbols of sovereignty. During the festival of Seker at sunrise, priests drew the sledge on which was placed the “Seker boat” which contained a coffer with the body of the dead sun-god or Osiris. The sun sailed in the boat over the sky during the second half of the day and entered the underworld in the evening. The combination with Ptah represented a personification of the union of the primordial creative power with the power of darkness, that is, a form of Osiris or the night sun or the dead sun-god. It was depicted as a man who wears upon his head a crown made of disk, plumes, horns, and uraei with disks.

A later representation of this tri-une god Ptah-Seker-Osiris is a statuette of a divinity with an inscription dated circa 690 B.C.E., called “Lord of the Secret Sanctuary.” This inscription states: “Pi-heri-pa-shai, the son of Pakhois, will serve Ptah-Sokaris-Osiris forever and ever.”⁸⁰ This composite deity arose as a result of the decline of Amun in Thebes.

The trinity can also be incorporated into the fourth god as in the Demotic text from the third century B.C.E. where the three gods, Ptah, Re, and Harsiesis (Horus, son of Isis), are fused into one, who is Apis, and each one is Apis. Apis, therefore, incorporates three gods. It should be added, however, that Apis is identified with each of the three gods separately; the net result is a tetrad in which one deity is equated with each member of the triad.⁸¹ In the Christian Trinity, on the other hand, with its doctrine of Three in One and One in Three, the triadic structure remains unless one posits a quaternity – one substance and three persons (entities).

These examples represent a trinity as a unity of three gods in one. Thus, this trinity can be classified as tritheistic.

Modalistic Trinities

There is another type of trinity in Egyptian theology representing a modalistic trinity. Though this type preserves the idea of unity, it could not be a model for a unity of three persons in one entity. The cult of the sun may provide an example where one sun becomes visible in three aspects or manifestations

⁷⁹ Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. I, p. 507.

⁸⁰ Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, p. 255; Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, pp. 105, 143, 144.

⁸¹ Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, p. 256; Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, p. 144.

(*The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, chap. XV). In the *Pyramid Texts*, the three phases of the sun course are assigned to the three forms of the sun-god: the process of the sunrise, Khepera (one who rises); the crossing of the sky during the day, Re; and the sunset, Atum (one who sets).⁸² Later during the Ramesside period in the *Myth of Re and Isis*, Re is made to say: “I am Khepera in the morning, and Re at noonday, and Atum in the evening.”⁸³ The act of worship is also related to the seasons. There are triple references to places: East, mid-heaven, and West; to heaven, earth, and under earth; to division of age: child, man, old man; to the phases of life: birth, maturity, death. There is a triadic concept of three aspects of time: past (represented by Osiris), present (Horus), and future (Re):

I am Yesterday; I know Tomorrow.

What then is this?

Yesterday is Osiris, and Tomorrow is Re, on the day when he shall destroy the enemies of Neb-er-tcher, and when he shall establish as prince and ruler his son Horus, or (as they say), on the day when we commemorate the festival of the meeting of the dead Osiris with his father Rê, and when the battle of the gods was fought in which Osiris, lord of Amenet, was the leader.⁸⁴

The Trinity of Becoming

The trinity in the Egyptian theology can also come from the process whereby gods are created from one primordial god, the “trinity of becoming.” This represents a transition from monism to “tritheistic trinity”:

Atum is he who (once) came into being, who masturbated in Ôn. He took his phallus in his grasp that he might create an orgasm by means of it, and so were born Shu and Tefnet.⁸⁵

O Atum Khoprer, you became high on the height, you rose up as the *bnbn*-stone in the Mansion of the “Phoenix” in Ôn, you spat out Shu, you expectorated Tefnet, and you set your arms about them as the arms of *ka*, that your essence might be in them.⁸⁶

In another version of the *Pyramid Texts*, this process is described more precisely:

I am “life,” the lord of years, alive until infinity, a lord of eternity, [I am he] whom Atum, the eldest, has brought forth through his might [at the time] when he brought

⁸² Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Utterances 570, 571, 587, 600, 606.

⁸³ Modalistic trinity from the tomb of Ramses IX. Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. 1, pp. 352, 384.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, XVII, p. 282.

⁸⁵ Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Utterance 527.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Utterance 600, slightly modified. Atum was the generator of the Great Ennead.

forth Shu and Tefnut [or Tefnet] in Heliopolis, when he was One [and] when he became Three.⁸⁷

Atum is portrayed in these texts as the original being self-begotten and who creates the other gods. The meaning of this text is that in creating Shu and Tefnet he produces a divine trinity with the same essence (substance) which is a family unit of a rare kind – father, son, and daughter. This trinity is remarkably similar to the speculation of Tertullian, who postulated the unity of the triad based on the unity of substance.

More Recent Trinities

In more recent texts which attest to the occurrences of the triune concepts, Griffiths cites the following groupings:⁸⁸

1. In the Demotic Chronicle from the third century B.C.E.: “‘Apis, Apis, Apis’: that means Ptah, Re, Harsiesis, who are the lords of the office of the sovereign.... The three gods denote Apis. Apis is Ptah, Apis is Re, Apis is Harsiesis.”

This text proclaims the unity of the three, but nevertheless some supremacy of Apis.

2. An inscription in the Temple of Opet in Karnak, from the third century B.C.E. in which Thoth is described as the “heart of Rê, the tongue of Ta-Tenen, the throat of Hidden-of-name [Amun].”
3. On the gate of Eurgetes in Karnak from the third century B.C.E., god Khons is described in the same way as was god Thoth previously.
4. Martial in *Epigram* 5.24 from circa 98 C.E. describes Hermes, a gladiator: “Hermes who is alone in all things and three times one [*ter unus*].”

Martial refers here to the gladiatorial contest in which a gladiator named Hermes excelled in three arts, therefore he is “three times one.” The name of the gladiator invites an association with Hermes Trismegistos, though such an association in the mind of Martial seems unlikely, and he probably had in mind a god with three facets or forces.

5. Dedication in an Egyptian quarry of Mons Claudianus, 117 C.E.: “To Zeus Helios the great Sarapis.”

This example represents a syncretism of two traditions: the Greco-Roman and the Egyptian. The Egyptian tradition points to a fusion of the triad into a trinity.

6. Inscription in the temple of Luxor, 116 C.E. similar to (5) expressing the unity of several deities, dyadic, triadic, or tetradic.

⁸⁷ Text quoted in Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, p. 145.

⁸⁸ Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, pp. 256–259, after Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*.

7. Text in Greek on the Egyptian Amulet from the first–second century C.E.: “One is Baït, one is Hathor, one is Akori, to these belongs one power. Be greeted, father of the world, be greeted, God in three forms (τρίμορφος θεός).” The one God (father of the universe) has in his attributes three forms or appearances. Three gods are combined and treated as a single being.
8. Tertullian in *De Pallio*, 4,3, circa 205 C.E., dismisses the claim of the three-headed monster Geryon showing an interest in the trinitarian concept: “Where is Geryon, the three-times one?”

This example illustrates possible influence of an idea of the tri-unity on Christian writers. In Greek culture Cerberus, Chimaera, and Hecate were imagined as having a different body conjoined in one being. Hecate, for example, a goddess of triple crossroads, has statues with three forms: Selene in heaven, Artemis on earth, and Hecate in hell. Similarly, Cerberus has three heads – of a lion, wolf, and a dog – which are associated with the present, past, and future.⁸⁹

9. An inscription in Mithraeum in a room of the Baths of Caracala in Rome, dated after 212 C.E.: “One is Zeus Sarapis Helius, ruler of the world, invincible.”
10. This interpretation of Zeus was confirmed later by Julian in his *Orations* IV, in the fourth century C.E.: “One is Zeus, one is Hades, one is Helius Sarapis.”

It seems that Egyptian theologians during the second millennium B.C.E. provided the earliest examples in human history of both monotheism (with Akhenaten) and trinitarianism. Early Indian religion presents a rival trinity, but if we consider the *Rig Veda*⁹⁰ as the earliest Indian text, composed around 1200–1000 B.C.E., the Egyptian tradition has priority. Moreover, the influence of the Indian tradition on the development of the Christian doctrines cannot be substantiated.

⁸⁹ *Bulfinch's Mythology* (New York: Avenel Books, 1979).

⁹⁰ *The Rig Veda: An Anthology*, selected, translated, and annotated by Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984).

Appendix II

Egyptian Chronology

Early dynastic period: First and Second Dynasties	ca. 2900–2628 B.C.E.
Old Kingdom: Third to Eighth Dynasty	ca. 2628–2134 B.C.E.
Instruction Texts from 2600	
<i>Pyramid Texts</i> from 2350	
First intermediate period: Ninth to Eleventh Dynasty	ca. 2134–2040 B.C.E.
Coffin Texts from 2100	
Middle Kingdom: Eleventh to Fourteenth Dynasty	ca. 2040–1650 B.C.E.
Second intermediate period: Hyksos	ca. 1650–1551 B.C.E.
New Kingdom: Seventeenth to Twentieth Dynasty	ca. 1551–1070 B.C.E.
Eighteenth Dynasty (<i>Book of the Dead</i> , Amduat, Litany of Re, Book of Gates)	ca. 1527–1306 B.C.E.
Amarna period (Amenophis IV = Akhenaten)	ca. 1361–1340 B.C.E.
Ramessid period: Nineteenth to Twentieth Dynasty	ca. 1306–1070 B.C.E.
Third intermediate period	ca. 1070–664 B.C.E.
Twenty-First to Twenty-Fifth Dynasty	
Late period: Twenty-Fifth to Thirty-First Dynasty	ca. 664–332 B.C.E.
Macedonian period	ca. 332–304 B.C.E.
Ptolemaic period	304–30 B.C.E.
Roman period	30 B.C.E.–395 C.E.

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