Why Three?

An exploration of the origins of the doctrine of the Trinity with reference to Platonism and Gnosticism

Thomas E. Gaston

Worcester College, Oxford

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Short Abstract

In this thesis I explore the emergence of the Christian triad with reference to two contemporary movements: Middle Platonism and Gnosticism. The earliest Christian writer to enumerate the three constituents of what would become the Christian Trinity is Justin. In addition to his three extant works, Justin's triadology can be diagnosed from those he directly influenced – Tatian and Athenagoras – who I have (somewhat artificially) grouped under the heading the "school of Justin". The ontological triad adopted by these Christian thinkers is compared with the triads of Middle Platonism and Gnosticism, both in terms of their structure and in terms of the function and ontological status of the individual constituents of these triads.

In this thesis I propose that a liturgical triad of primitive Christianity, the trine baptismal formula, was conflated by the "school of Justin" with the ontological triad of Middle Platonism, resulting in three referents of the baptismal formula being embued with new functions and ontological status. Whilst emerging as a hierarchical triad, the logic of Platonic ontology when combined with Christian tradition required the sharp distinction between God, as Being, and all other things resulting in a Christian triad that was also a unity. This new triad became fixed as a central tenet of Christianity.

I find no plausible connection between any known Gnostic triad and the triad of the "school of Justin". There is some interaction between Gnostic and Platonic thought during this period. It is possible that the Triple-Powered One pre-empted the Being-Mind-Life triad of Neoplatonism.

Long Abstract

In this thesis I explore the emergence of the Christian triad with reference to two contemporary movements: Middle Platonism and Gnosticism. The earliest Christian text to enumerate a divine triad is Justin's *First Apology*. This same triad is found in subsequent Christian texts and is ultimately reconfigured to become the Christian Trinity. I seek to explain the origins of this Christian triadology. There are two movements – Middle Platonism and Gnosticism – that were each part of the second century intellectual milieu, that each interacted with Christianity and that each posited ontological triads. On this basis these two movements are plausible candidates explain to the emergence of the Christian triad in the mid-second century.

I survey both Middle Platonism and Gnosticism to identify triads. These triads are analysed in terms of their structure and in terms of the function and ontological status of the individual constituents of these triads. This forms the basis of comparison with the Christian triad. In Middle Platonism, isosceles triads are diagnosed with a transcendent One above a pair of opposites; this pattern is found Eudorus, as well as Philo and Plutarch. Weak triadic structures are diagnosed in Plutarch and Atticus, who posit God

and his emanating mind above the world soul; a similar pattern is found in Alcinous. The Neopythagorean interpretation of the Parmenides, perhaps as early as Thrasyllus, prompts a number of ontological triads, including the three Ones of Moderatus and the three gods of Numenius; this same pattern may be found in the *Chaldean Oracles.* Common to the triads of Plutarch and the Neopythagoreans is a hierarchical triad of transcendent God, mind and soul that will culminate in the three hypostases on Plotinus. It is this hierarchical triad that forms the best comparator with the Christian triad of the second century.

In Gnosticism and its cognate systems, I diagnose familial triads of father, mother and child in the Barbeolite tradition and three-male triads in the Ophite tradition. These triads may have pagan antecedents. There is also some evidence of the Platonic God-Mind-Soul triad within Gnostic systems. Early third century Gnostic texts contain a three-in-one triad, that is, a trinity, named the Triple-Powered One. This triad is later overwritten with the Neoplatonic Being-Mind-Life triad. None of the Gnostic triads seem plausible comparators for the Christian triad; there are some structural similarities but insignificant functional overlap to make influence credible.

I examine Christian thought prior to Justin and demonstrate that there was no ontological triad. This analysis focuses on the three constituents of what would become the Trinity. I demonstrate that God is identified as the Father, who, whilst considered transcendent, is also personally involved with creation and with believers. The Son is considered to be more than a man, born of a virgin and exalted to the heavens, but not identified with God; ontologically speaking, the Son is distinct. The Spirit is considered to be the power and presence of God, sometimes personified but not considered a distinct person. These Christians do not consider these three to be either a triad or a unity in ontological terms. There is, however, a clear liturgical triad that I trace to primitive Christianity: the trine baptismal formula. I conclude that the baptismal formula was an expression of the Christian experience and thus of the faith to which candidates committed themselves to in baptism. The inclusion of the Spirit in the baptismal formula did not, for primitive Christians, denote a separate person or being, but a separate experience. This liturgical triad was to provide part of the basis for the emerging Christian triad.

Justin is considered along with two Christian figures whom he directly influenced – Tatian and Athenagoras – who I have (somewhat artificially) grouped under the heading the "school of Justin". These three are grouped for their shared thought pattern, which assists with the analysis of the emerging Christian triad by providing a wider set of datum. This is not to deny the innovations of these thinkers, which are also explored. I demonstrate that the "school of Justin" posited an ontological triad with a transcendent Father, a demiurgic and noetic Son, and immanent, world-penetrating Spirit. This is the conflation of the three referents of the trine baptismal formula with the three constituents of the Platonc God-Mind-Soul triad. I present evidence that Justin and Athenagoras engaged directly with Platonism, probably with Numenian and Plutarchian Platonism respectively. Tatian probably did not engage directly with Platonism but was influenced through Justin.

I also trace an argument developed by the "school of Justin" based upon the Platonic distinction between Being and Becoming. By identifying God as Being, identifying Being with that which is unbegotten, and identifying that which is unbegotten as creator, the "school of Justin" develops an argument for identifying the Son and the Spirit as

God. This leads these thinkers to move beyond the Platonic precedent by unifying their hierarchical triad into a single substance. In so doing the "school of Justin" provides the basis for what will become the Christian Trinity.

Therefore I conclude that the Christian triad of the "school of Justin" emerged through a conflation of the trine baptismal formula with an ontological triad of Middle Platonism, which resulted in the three referents of the baptismal formula being embued with new functions and ontological status. Whilst emerging as a hierarchical triad, the logic of Platonic ontology when combined with Christian tradition required the sharp distinction between God as Being and all other things resulting in a Christian triad that was also a unity. This new triad became fixed as a central tenet of Christianity.

οὐχὶ ἐμώρανεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου; (1 Cor 1:20b)

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"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Tim 1:17)

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Abbreviations

AGP - *Archivfür Geschichte der Philosophie*
ANRW - *Aufstieg und Niedergang de Romischen Welt*
AUG - Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis
BJRL - *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BUP - Brown University Press
CEBI - *Christadelphian eJournal of Biblical Interpretation*
CoUP - Cornell University Press
CQ - *The Classical Quarterly*
CR - *The Classical Review*
CSCA - *California Studies in Classical Antiquity*
CSRSGHPC - *Commentationes Societatis Regiae Scientiarum Gottingensis Historicaeet Philolohicae Classis*
CUP - Cambridge University Press
ET - *Expository Times*
HS - *HellenistischeStudien*
HTR - *Harvard Theological Review*
HUP - Harvard University Press
ICS - *Illinois Classical Studies*
IVP - InterVarsity Press
JBL - *Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS - *Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JEH - *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
JETS - *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHP - *Journal of the History of Philosophy*
JRR - *A Journal from the Radical Reformation*
JTS - *Journal of Theological Studies*
NTS - *New Testament Studies*
OUP - Oxford University Press
RIPLS - *Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series*
RQ - *Renaissance Quarterly*
SBL - Society of Biblical Literature
SIUP - Southern Illinois University Press
SJT - *Scottish Journal of Theology*
TAPA - *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*
UBS - United Bible Societies
UIB - *University of Illinois Bulletin*
UNDP - University of Notre Dame Press
UPV - University Press of Virginia
UWP - University of Wales Press
YUP - Yale University Press
ZAC - *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*
ZNW - *Zeitschriftfür die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

1. Introduction

John Whittaker described the second century as "one of the most crucial moments in the history of human thought"; as the period when "the new religion of Christianity came into contact with the old and well-established world of Greek philosophy".[1] H. B. Timothy writes of this period that "amid the 'contending voices' three can eventually be heard, louder and more insistent, more sustained and challenging, the voices of Gnosticism, of Greek Philosophy, and of Christianity".[2] These three voices – Middle Platonism, Gnosticism and Christianity –not only struggled against each other but also influenced each other, by either synthesis or reaction.

The second century was also one of the most crucial moments in the history of Christian dogma, as the period when Christian thinkers began to articulate in detail their ontology. It is during this period that we first encounter Christians who enumerate a divine triad (Justin, 1 Apol 13, 60; Theophilus, *To Autolycus* II.15), the constituents of which will ultimately become the co-equal and co-eternal Persons of the Christian Trinity. The coincidence of these doctrinal developments with a period of engagement with the wider intellectual milieu prompts my enquiry into whether either Gnosticism or Middle Platonism can explicate these doctrinal developments.

Platonism and the Trinity

Suggestions that the Christian Trinity may have been pre-empted by Platonism have been around for a long time. Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) felt compelled to respond to another cleric who suggested that the doctrine of the Trinity came from Plato, arguing instead that the Neoplatonists took their triad from reading the gospel of John and the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite.[3] The suggestion resurfaced in anti-Catholic polemics following the Reformation, particularly amongst English Unitarians like Paul Best (1590-1657), who accused Platonism of corrupting the early church, and continental Socinians like Daniel Zwicker (*Irenicum Irenicorum,* 1658) and Jacques Souverain (*Le Platonisme dévoilé*, 1700), who spoke of the "Platonic captivity of primitive Christianity".[4]

The nineteenth century saw the first detailed histories of Christian doctrinal development. Protestant scholars, like Harnack, no doubt influenced by a degree of anti-Catholicism (not to mention the anti-Platonism of his teacher, Ritschl[5]), put forward the thesis that doctrines like the Trinity had emerged as the original gospel message was Hellenised; "dogma in its conception and development is a work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel".[6] He judged that the Protestant Reformation had not completed the search for the original gospel. However, not all scholars shared Harnack's assessment Werner Jaeger, in *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, proposed that Platonism was a virtue, seeing Greek patristic theology as the peak of Hellenic thought. Catholic scholars also criticised Harnack, rejecting the idea that the development of

[1] J. Whittaker, "Plutarch, Platonism and Christianity", in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought* (eds. A. H. Armstrong, H. J. Blumenthal & R. A. Markus; London: Variorum, 1981) 50.
[2] H. B. Timothy, *The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy* (Assen: Van Gorcum ,1973)3.
[3] *Opera Omnia* 956.2; cf. M. J. B. Allen, "Marsilio Ficino on Plato, the Neoplatonists and the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity", *RQ* 37.4 (1984) 555-584
[4] P. C. H. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* (OUP, 2012) 11.
[5] G. F. Chesnut, "A Century of Patristic Studies" in *A Century of Church History: The Legacy of Philip Schaff* (ed. H. W. Bowden; SIUP, 1988) 40
[6] A. von Harnack, *History of Dogma,* (trans. Neil Buchanan; New Dover Publications, 1961) 1:17.

Christian doctrine was in some way illegitimate. In *Histoire ancienne de l'églis*, Louis Duchesne, though critical of Platonism, argued that the essence of Christianity is to be found in the Church, as its developments were guided by the Spirit. J. Tixeront, in his *Histoire des dogmes,* proclaimed the doctrine of "the substantial immutability of dogma": Christianity may have cast itself in the Hellenic form, but this was necessary for it to become a universal religion.[7]

Nevertheless, Harnack's analysis resonated in both English and German scholarship. Lamson argued that the Trinity was grafted into Christianity by the "Platonizing Fathers", under the influence of Philo and the Alexandrian Platonists.[8] Wendt argued that, whilst John had tried to counter representatives of the Alexandrian school with his own Logos doctrine, Justin had adopted the Logos as the Platonic "middle being" intended to bridge the gap between God and the world.[9] Paine went further, comparing the Christian Trinity with a number "ethnic trinities" (Hindu, Zoroastrian, Homeric and Platonic).[10]

In the 1950s there was renewed criticism of Harnack's thesis from scholars like J. Daniélou, who argued that no early patristic author belonged wholly to the Hellenistic cultural world, but overlapped with Jewish and Latin worlds as well. With more in-depth analysis of Greek philosophical concepts around the 1970s, particularly from classicists like John Dillon and John Whittaker, historians seemed to vindicate Harnack's methodology but did not always support his conclusions. Many concluded that the fathers made use of Platonic language but pursued different ideas.[11]A number of scholars have cast doubt on the proposal that the Christian fathers were unilaterally influenced by Platonism. Henning Ziebritzki, tracing the congruence of terminology in Origen and Plotinus, nevertheless argues that Origen's third hypostasis, the Holy Spirit, is prompted by received tradition, whereas Plotinus' third hypostasis, the World Soul, is required by his metaphysical scheme.[12] Similarly Mark Edwards argues that Origen's Trinitarianism and Logos-doctrine are primarily biblical rather than philosophical.[13]

Explaining the origins of the Trinity by appeal to Platonism has also come under pressure from the renewed defences of the primitiveness of Christian Trinitarian thinking. Larry Hurtado and Richard Bauckham have argued that early Christianity was (at least) binitarian in its understanding of God, including Jesus within the unique identity of God in its worship.[14] Such conclusions amongst NT scholars have lessened

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[7]L. Duchesne,*Histoire ancienne de l'église*(Paris: E. de Boccard, 1923); J. Tixeront, *Histoire des dogmesdans l'antiquite chretienne* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1922); cf. Chesnut, "A Century of Patristic Studies", 48ff

[8]A. Lamson, *The Church of the First Three Centuries* (Boston: Horace B. Fuller, 1873).

[9]H. Wendt, *System der Christlichen Lehre* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1907).

[10]L. L. Paine, *The Ethnic Trinities and their relations to the Christian Trinity* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co; 1901).

[11]J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 BC to AD 220,* (Ithaca, NY: CoUP, 1977; rev. 1996); see collected essays of John Whittaker in *Studies in Platonism and Patristic Thought* (Variorum Reprints, 1984); cf. Chesnut, "A Century of Patristic Studies", 42

[12]H. Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist und Weltseele: Das Problem der dritten Hypostase bei Origens, Plotin und ihren Vorlaufern* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994).

[13] See M. J. Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003)

[14]See L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

the significance of the apologists as innovators, who, if anything, seem to deviate from this proposed proto-orthodoxy.

Today there are still those on the periphery who make bold claims about the Platonic origins of the Trinity. For example, Anthony Buzzard claims the doctrine of the Trinity arose as a misunderstanding of John's Logos for the Philonic Logos.[15] More radically, Marian Hillar has attempted to trace the concept of Logos from Pythagoras through to Justin and beyond, seeing the origins of the Trinity in Platonism (particularly Numenius) and from Egyptian religion (through Tertullian).[16]The current consensus on the issue is, perhaps, expressed in two recent compendiums on the Trinity:

> Early theologians never simply transpose the trinitarian faith into the philosophical categories available in their days. In this intercultural encounter there has not been a Hellenization of Christianity, as Adolf Harnack charges. Rather the reverse is true, that is, there has been a Christianization of Greek thought.[17]

> Some of the Apologists ... bring to their Trinitarian reflection a familiarity with Greek philosophical thought and a willingness to use it in explaining the Christian faith to their pagan contemporaries ...Above all one must never lose sight of the fact that Justin's Logos theology is not about Stoicism, Middle Platonism, or Philonic Hellenistic Judaism; rather it is about Jesus Christ.[18]

Gnosticism and the Trinity

The accusation that the Christian Trinity was derived from Gnosticism is at least as old as the fourth century, when Marcellus of Ancyra (d. 374) claimed that Valentinus "devised the notion of three subsistent entities and three persons" (*On the Holy Church* 9). However, Gnosticism has not been a prominent factor cited in histories of dogma, this not least due to an absence of evidence (prior to the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices) and a lack of clarity regarding what sort of phenomenon Gnosticism represented. For example, Harnack represented Gnosticism as a more acute form of the Hellenisation of Christianity from which orthodox Christianity suffered. Other scholars, such as Bousset and Reitzenstein, considered Gnosticism to be rooted in the Orient, particularly Iranian religion.[19] Later, Hans Jonas interpreted Gnosticism as the reaction to the Hellenic worldview in favour of oriental mythology.[20] Today, Sethian (or "Classic") Gnosticism is often considered to be a Jewish phenomenon only latterly Christianised. Gnosticism is now understood to have been significantly influenced by Middle Platonism in its own development during the second century and onwards.[21]

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[15]A. F. Buzzard & C. F. Hunting, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound* (Lanhan: International Scholars Publications, 1998); A. F. Buzzard, *Jesus was not a Trinitarian* (Morrow: Restoration Fellowship, 2007).

[16]Hillar also claims that Jesus did not exist and that most Christian doctrine originates from the Hellenisation of a Jewish apocalyptic sect. M. Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity: The Evolution of Religious Beliefs from Pythagoras to Tertullian* (New York: CUP, 2012). Also see T. E. Gaston, review of M. Hillar, *From Logos to Trinity*, *CEBI* 6:3 (2012).

[17]P. C. Phan, "Developments of the doctrine of the Trinity" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity* (ed. P. C. Phan; New York: CUP, 2011) 9.

[18]S. M. Hildebrand, "The Trinity in the Ante-Nicene Fathers" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity* (ed. G. Emery & M. Levering; Oxford: OUP, 2011) 96-7.

[19]W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1907); R. A. Reitzenstein, *Historia Monachorum und Historia Lausiaca : eine Studie zur Geschichte des Mönchtums und der frühchristlichen Begriffe Gnostiker und Pneumatiker* (Göttingen, 1916)

[20]H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Relgion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958).

[21]See J. D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Presses Université Laval, 2001)

Despite the presence of triadic configurations within Gnostic mythology, scholars have seldom proposed any significant impact on the doctrine of the Trinity. Grant writes, "although it is true that the Gnostics often presented speculations about divine triads or even triune beings, it is hard to see how their teaching could have influenced Christians".[22] Edwards suggests that "while they never propounded a doctrine of the triune God, the Gnostics may have excited speculation in other quarters on relationship between the hidden God and his manifold revelation".[23] Turner has even suggested that early Christianity, with its ambiguity about the Spirit, may have inhibited the triadic tendencies in some forms of Gnosticism, which flourished in non-Christian (Sethian) Gnosticism.[24] The general consensus seems to be that Trinitarian theology was defended and re-articulated against Gnosticism, rather than prompted by it.[25] There are, however, a few voices proposing a direct Gnostic influence on the development of the doctrine of the Trinity.[26]

One proposal linking the Christian Trinity to Gnostic triads is that of J. Gwyn Giffiths, who was seeking a plausible intermediary stage between Egyptian religion, with its many divine triads (e.g. Amun-Ptah-Khonsu), and Christianity. He argues that "the possible influence of Egypt on early theological development is to some extent linked to the evolution of Gnosticism".[27] He proposes that it was through Gnostic influence on Clement and Origen that Egyptian triadology was introduced into Christianity; he considers Justin's contribution to the development of the Trintiy to be "slight".[28]

Proposed Analysis

In this thesis I will diagnose the presence of triads in both Middle Platonism and Gnosticism, before going on to consider their influence (if any) upon the emergence of the Christian triad in the second century. It will not be sufficient to show that there are triads: I will also attempt to analyse the function and ontological status of the constituents of these triads, upon which proper comparison with the Christian triad can be based. This analysis will concentrate on thinkers contemporary with the second century apologists, that is, pre-Plotinian (Middle) Platonism and second century Gnosticism. I will note methodological problems with regard to determining the date and provenance of these sources as I proceed.

For my purpose, the term "triad" is preferable to "trinity" as the latter implies the ontological unity of the three constituents, a concept that arises only latterly in Christianity. It is also important to distinguish between co-ordinate triads, of three co-equal constituents and hierarchical triads, with a descending line of three constituents. Both of these then need to be distinguished from non-ontological triads, such as a group of three persons, objects or ideas conjoined for rhetorical or liturgical convenience. The

[22]R. M. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Charlottesville, VA: UPV, 1966) 89.
[23]M. J. Edwards, "Exegesis and the Early Christian Doctrine of the Trinity" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinty* (ed. G. Emery & M. Levering; Oxford: OUP, 2011) 82.
[24] Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 211n23
[25]See J. A. McGuckin, "The Trinity in the Greek Fathers" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity* (ed. P. C. Phan; New York: CUP, 2011) 58-59; Hildebrand, "Ante-Nicene Fathers", 99-101
[26]For example, M. M. Mattison, "The Development of Trinitarianism in the Patristic Period", *JRR* 1:4 (1992) 4-15
[27]J. G. Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity* (Cardiff: UWP, 1996) 248
[28] Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, 218

presence of these triadic formulas in second century texts is not significant unless it also betokens some ontological understanding.

Though my thesis primarily concerns the period of the apologists, it will be necessary to say something about Christianity prior to Justin. In that section I will hope to demonstrate what was the Christian ontological understanding of Father, Son and Spirit before the emergence of an enumerated triad in the work of Justin. It will also be important to give recognition to liturgical triads because of their significance in the development of ontological triads; the most important Christian liturgical triad is the trine baptismal formula, which I will demonstrate is primitive.

The core of my thesis regards a group of apologists that I have subsumed under the title "the school of Justin", namely, Justin, Tatian and Athenagoras. This grouping does not imply the existence of a corresponding historical grouping, though some relation between these three thinkers is likely. These thinkers are grouped as holding, and developing, a shared thought-pattern. I will analyse the triad posited by the "school" of Justin and its relationship to contemporary Platonic and Gnostic triads. I will also explore any historical evidence suggestive of the influence of Platonism and Gnosticism on the "school" of Justin.

Having completed this analysis I will attempt to draw out its implications for the role of Platonism or Gnosticism on the origins of the Christian Trinity.

2. Middle Platonic Triads

a. Introduction

The term "Middle Platonism" is used to designate those Platonists who precede Plotinus, starting with Antiochus of Aschalon.[29] For my purposes I am interested in those Platonists who are roughly contemporary with the emergence and development of Christianity in the first two centuries. These thinkers are significant either as representative of general Platonic themes or for their own ideas, either of which may be influential upon Christianity. Thoughts do not exist independent of thinkers and if a Christian was influenced by Platonism, it would be through personal or literary contact (even if mediated by a non-Platonic source). We will, however, have to allow that the specific Platonist or Platonic text no longer exists, in which case it will be necessary to rely on general themes to demonstrate dependence.

I have, more or less, followed Dillon in dividing the Middle Platonists into categories. This is helpful in grouping together Platonists who have something in common, but also helpful in determining influence. For example, a Christian at Athens is more likely to be influenced by Athenian Platonism than, say, Alexandrian Platonism. That being said, we should be cautious of imposing artificial boundaries on the spread of ideas. We should not be surprised, for example, to find Christians at Rome exposed to a spectrum of different philosophical and religious ideas. I have not given the same weight as Dillon to the different Platonists. For example, the *Chaldean Oracles* are of more significance in terms of divine triads than many of the more strictly philosophical Platonic sources.

I have omitted the School of Gaius, under which Dillon considers Gaius, Albinus and Galen, because there are no divine triads in the material extant.[30] Albinus' surviving work, *Eisagoge*, is of little relevance; his other works, *On Plato's Doctrines* (Test.1) and a commentary of the *Timaeus*[31] would no doubt have been relevant if only they had survived. Galen is reserved in his theological statements; he describes his work on anatomy as the best worship of the Creator[32] and adopts a teleological argument (PHP, IX.8.23-24; cf. VII.5.18), but does not propose to have any firm knowledge of the nature of the Designer (PHP IX.9.2).[33] According to Galen, Hippocrates identified this providence with Nature (PHP IX.8.27) and Plato identified it with the Demiurge (PHP IX.9.1), but Galen will not make any "bold assertions" (PHP IX.9.7).

I have also omitted the sophist Maximus of Tyre, who is allied to no particular school and is a limited source for Platonism.[34] He says, "there is one God who is father and

[29]Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, xii-xvi.

[30] For discussion and for the testimonies for Gaius and Albinus see T. Göransson, *Albinus, Alcinous, Arius Didymus* (Göteborg: AUG, 1995). Albinus is no longer identified with Alcinous, author of the *Didaskalikos* (*Pace* J. Freudenthal, "Der Platoniker Albinos und der falsche Alkinoos", *HS* 3 (1879); Cf. J. Dillon, *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford: OUP, 1993)).

[31] Göransson, *Albinus*, 71-76.

[32] P. N. Singer, *Galen: Selected Works* (Oxford: OUP, 1997) xviii

[33] He regarded inquiry into practical topics, such as ethics and politics, as useful but inquiry into other matters is "appropriate only for those philosophers who have chosen speculative philosophy" (PHP IX.7.9). Cf. O. Temkin, *Galenism: Rise and Decline of a Medical Philosophy* (Ithacan, NY: CoUP, 1973)44.

[34] The Greek text of Maximus' *Orations* is supplied in M. B. Trapp, *Maximus Tyrus: Dissertationes* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1994). An English translation is supplied in M. B. Trapp, *Maximus of Tyre: The Philosophical Orations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). For discussion of Maximus' relationship to

king of all" (*Or.* 11.5), whom he identifies as Beauty (21.7) and "most perfect form of intellect" (11.8), but he does not mention a second intellect.[35] His intermediaries are "a whole host of visible and invisible deities" (11.12; "daimons" 8.8).[36]

One methodological problem highlighted by Dillon is the propensity of scholars to view the Middle Platonists only as precursors to Plotinus.[37] This propensity is due to the often fragmentary nature of our sources. It is tempting to supplement our limited knowledge with Plotinian philosophy. This methodology is not entirely unjustified – the evidence we do have warrants viewing the direction of travel within Middle Platonism as pointing towards Plotinus – but it is in danger of denying the originality of Plotinus, or the peculiarity of some of the Middle Platonists. This danger is particularly pertinent for my thesis, as Plotinus has a fully formed triad (One-Intellect-Soul), and it would be tempting to read this scheme onto his predecessors. However, we must let the Middle Platonists speak for themselves.

b. Alexandrian Platonism

i. Eudorus (c.25 BC)

We know little enough about Eudorus and yet he is significant both as an example of Alexandrian Platonism and of the Neopythagorean tradition. He is reported to have been a commentator on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*[38]and *Categories,* [39]but we have only a handful of fragments relating to him.[40] Dillon speculates that Eudorus learnt Platonism from Dion, the pupil of Antiochus, but the evidence is circumstantial; he also notes the important influence of Neopythagoreanism (see below).[41]

For our purposes, the two significant fragments are those preserved by Simplicius in a section about the teachings of the Pythagoreans (*in Phys.* 181.9-18, 23-39). Eudorus recounts that Pythagoreans posit two levels of principles (αρχαὶ). On the highest level is the Supreme One, also called "God-above". On a secondary level there are two principles or elements, namely the One and the nature opposed to it, also called "the Monad" and "the Indefinite Dyad" respectively.

In naming the second One "Monad", Eudorus identifies these two Pythagorean elements with the principles of Plato's Unwritten Doctrines.[42] His argument is that the Monad and Dyad cannot be absolute principles because they cannot be the common principle of all

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Platonism see Trapp, *Orations,* xxii-xxx; cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 399; P. Merlan, "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus" in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (ed. A. H. Armstrong; Cambridge: CUP, 1967) 81.Maximus refers to "our messenger from the Academy", and given the distinct similarities with the *Didaskalikos* one must wonder whether it is to Alcinous that he refers.

[35]Trapp, *Orations,* xxvii. Dillon writes, "Maximus' metaphysics are simple enough – God the Father and his Logos, which is his agent in the organizing of the universe, and a system of planetary gods and daemons" (Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 400) but talk of the Logos is misleading.

[36]Cf. Trapp, *Orations,* 94.

[37]Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* xiv.

[38]Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Met.*59.7

[39]Simplicius, *In Cat.*159.32

[40] The fragments of Eudorus are collected in M. J. Griffin, "The Reception of Aristotle's Categories c.80 BC to AD 220" (PhD diss. Oxford, 2009) 410-415.

[41]Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 113.

[42] Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 3-6.

things. The Monad is the first principle of one set of things, the Dyad the first principle of their opposites; neither can be the first principle of all, hence the need for a higher principle. Implicit in this reasoning is the transcendence of the Supreme One. Since, Eudorus argues, the Supreme One cannot belong to either set of opposites; by implication the One must transcend these opposites. As such, if good flows from the Monad and evil from the Dyad, then presumably the Supreme One must transcend both good and evil. Dillon is keen to take Philo into evidence and so have Eudorus posit that the Supreme One transcends all attributes.[43] If this is the case then we can see Eudorus provoking problems that will be addressed by later philosophers, such as how to define the Supreme One and how the Supreme One can interact with the world.

Another consequence of this reasoning is that the Dyad is regarded as unity, like the Monad ("both are in turn one"). The result is a triad of three αρχαὶ, which are also three Ones; a masculine and a feminine principle, with a transcendent principle above.

ii. Philo of Alexandria (c.20 BC – 40 AD)[44]

Introduction

Philo was born into a prominent Jewish family in Alexandria[45] and earned a reputation for being skilled in philosophy.[46] Dillon proposes that Philo was influenced by Eudorus.[47] This is not unlikely, though there is no explicit evidence of a direct acquaintance. Whilst Philo is deeply influenced by Platonism, his thought is underwritten by a belief in the primacy of Moses and his works are primarily an exercise in exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures. The thought of Philo is thus constrained by the axioms of Jewish religion, such as the belief in one God and identification of that God as the Creator. This might have been expected to preclude the occurrence of divine triads in his thought, but in fact triads do occur, if moulded into a monotheistic scheme.[48] Philo has no special fondness for threes and enumerates God with his powers in a number of ways (cf. *Cher.* 27f; *Fug.* 94f; *QE* 2.68).[49]

For our purposes, Philo is significant for two reasons. Firstly, he provides vital evidence for Alexandrian Platonism, which may supplement some of what is lost from the works of Eudorus. This procedure of reconstructing Eudorus' philosophy based upon the testimony of Philo (as Dillon attempts to do) rests upon the assumption that Philo was

[43]Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 128.

[44] Based upon his own testimony that he was an old man at the time of his embassy to Caligula (40 AD; *Embassy to Gaius* 28), his birth is assumed to have been c.20 BC.

[45] Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.259-260.

[46]*Antiquities* 18.259-260.

[47] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 143f

[48]In his exegesis of the visit of the three angels to Abraham (Gen 18) Philo explains how God can appear as three, like an object at noon casting two shadows (*Abr.* 119-23; cf. *QG* 4:30). Philo identifies the three as "He that is" (ὁ ὢν) and two attendant powers, the creative power is called "God" (θεος) and the ruling power is called "Lord" (κύριος).By ascribing the Septuagint names for God to His powers, Philo is acting upon his principle that God is essentially unnamable (*Somn.* 1.67), names, like "God" and "Lord" apply only to God's actions, not His Being (cf. *Leg.* 3.73). This is a triad of exegetical convenience, there is no suggestion that God is ontologically three or that the three angels were literally God. Whilst Paul uses θεος and κύριος to denote separate persons (1 Cor 8:6), he does not follow Philo in ascribing these names to two attendant powers or by denying θεος as an appropriate designation for God.

[49] In fact, Philo seems give greater import to the number seven, which he describes as "pure, inasmuch as it is virginal" (*QG* 2.12).

not an original thinker with regard to Platonism.[50] Such an assumption should be treated with caution, for whilst it is true that Philo's primary interest was interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures through contemporary philosophy, it also seems likely that in places Philo has modified the Platonic scheme to suit his own purposes. Nevertheless, where Philo clearly deviates from Platonic thought, this too can be informative. We should not dismiss the possibility that Philo makes philosophical innovations of his own.

Secondly, whilst Philo seems to have had little or no influence over other Platonists (saving the sometime posited connection with Numenius), his work does appear to have been influential amongst Christian theologians. The sheer number of Philo's works that have survived to the present day is testimony to the esteem that Christians had for this Alexandrian Jew. This influence is explicit in the writings of the Christian Alexandrians Clement and Origen: influence on other Christian writers like Justin and Athenagoras has been suggested, but is not undisputed.

God

Philo has a transcendent understanding of God. He says a "gulf" of "kind and nature" separates God from lower things (*Sacr.* 93); his nature is entirely unlike theirs. He is outside creation (*Migr.* 183); above space and time (*Post.* 14); above all powers and the Logos (*QE* 2.68; *QG* 2:62). Philo describes God as "transcending virtue, transcending knowledge, transcending the good itself and the beautiful itself" (*Opif.* 8; cf. *Contempl.* 1.2). God is "unnamable", "unutterable" and incomprehensible (*Somn.* 1.67); he is "qualityless" (*Leg.* 3.36; *Deus* 55-56; *Cher.* 67) and the most generic (*Gig.* 52). He identifies God as Being, using both the LXX's ὁ ὤν and Platonic τὸ ὄν.

The concept of the transcendence of God was already at work in Second Temple Judaism. The name of God was no longer uttered, or even written, except in copies of the scriptures. There was also a trend of emphasizing the roles of intermediaries like angels. Certain Platonists further asserted the utter transcendence of God, perhaps inheriting the doctrine of Speusippus. The reasons for positing the transcendence of God are different: Judaism of this period sought to protect God from impurity and anything unbecoming; Platonism of this period sought to remove limitation from God by denying definitions to God.[51] We can see both these trends at work in the writings of Philo. The terms in which Philo describes God's transcendence are the terms of Platonism, and given this divine transcendence recurs in later Platonists, it is likely that Philo is influenced by some form of negative theology.[52]Dillon suggests the epithets that Philo applies to God could have derived from Eudorus' description of the Supreme One.[53]For instance, according to Simplicius, Eudorus held that the Supreme One is above the Good. In as much as the Supreme One transcends the opposites, so it would seem to transcend their "appellations" and thus be "qualityless".

Dillon writes that the notion of an utterly transcendent God provokes the question of how God relates to the world.[54] This would be a particularly motivational problem for later

[50] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 155; cf. E. R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2nd ed. 1962), 95.
[51] Cf. S. Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 1979) 90-93.
[52] D. Winston, *Philo of Alexandria: The Contemplative Life, The Giants, and Selections* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981) 22.
[53]Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 155.
[54]Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 157.

Platonists as they posit metaphysical intermediaries, but how significant a problem is it for Philo? Certainly, Philo would have denied that God needed anyone or anything; for Philo, God is entirely self-sufficient (*Leg.* 3.181; *Det.* 54; *Deus* 7; *Mut.* 27). We also meet the apparent contradiction that, though God is transcendent, he is also immanent throughout the universe (*Post.* 14; *Sacr.* 67). The resolution of this contradiction is that it is God's being that transcends creation; God by his very nature could not inhabit creation (*Leg.* 1.43), nor can spatial terms be properly applied to God's being (*Conf.* 138). Instead it is God's powers that extend throughout the universe and thus God is present everywhere (*Conf.* 136).[55] Philo's notion of God's transcendence as undefined and most generic also motivates his epistemic assertions that man cannot comprehend "the essence of the Existent Being" (*Post.* 15). Yet God can be known through his works (*Leg.* 3.97f) - that is, through his powers. Philo sees no philosophical necessity for a metaphysical intermediary between God and the world. Though God is transcendent, it is still God who creates.[56]

Monad and Dyad

The concepts of monad and dyad are found occasionally in the works of Philo, and it is not always clear how he conceived of them. Sometimes these opposites are used as descriptions of human imperfections. For instance, Philo says "God speaks in unmixed monads … but our hearing is the product of … dyad" (*Deus* 83-4; cf. *Gig.* 52). These imperfections are due to our dyadic nature of soul and body (*Mos.* 2:288), since we are not created by God alone but many powers (*Opif.* 75). The concept of dyad is thus the explanation for imperfection, inasmuch as the Dyad is impure (*QG* 2.12), though the Dyad itself is passive (*Spec.* 3.180). The Dyad is identified as "the created" (*Somn.* 2.70) and "matter" (ὕλη) (*Spec.* 3.180). One of the perennial issues in Philonic scholarship is whether Philo thought of matter as pre-existent or whether God created *ex nihilo*.[57] Philo states that Moses was Plato's source for the *Timaeus* (*Prov.* 1.22) and accordingly describes matter as something primordial that God shapes (*cf. Her.* 134ff). However, the Dyad cannot be an active principle independent of God, as Philo will not allow competitors for God's sovereignty (cf. *Leg.* 2.2); instead he argues for a passive cause alongside the active (*Opif.* 7-9). As Runia concludes, "God is the ἀρχή of being; matter is a passive quasi-existent object on which that being is conferred".[58] If this is so, then it indicates a significant shift in Middle Platonic thought already apparent in Eudorus, whereby matter (= Dyad) is no longer a primary principle (ἀρχή).

It is not clear whether Philo identifies the Monad with God. The Monad is praised above the Dyad (*Spec.* 1.180), being worthy of reverence as the Maker (*Somn.* 2.70). In one place Philo says "one who honours the Dyad before the Monad should not fail to know that he holds matter in higher esteem than God", which might indicate that the Monad is God. Yet in the preceding line Philo describes the Monad as "the image (εικῶν) of the first cause" (*Spec.* 3.180). The "first cause" cannot be other than God; the image may be the Logos (cf. *Leg.* 3.96; *Conf.* 95-97). This apparent distinction between the Monad and God might also be behind a second passage where Philo describes the Monad as the starting-point for philosophical investigation (*Praem.* 46). He concludes: "the seekers for truth are those who envisage God through God". If the 'second' God here is the Logos

[55] R. Williamson, *Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989) 43-44.
[56] D. T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986) 443.
[57] See H. A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Cambridge: HUP, 1948), 303-9; Winston, *Philo*, 7-13;
[58] Runia, *Philo*, 454.

(see below), then we have further justification for equating the Monad with the Logos. For Eudorus there was a Supreme One above the Monad, and if Philo equated God with the Supreme One then it is possible that he too conceived of God as being above the Monad. Indeed, in describing the Therapeutae, Philo writes that they worship "the Existent who is better than the Good, purer than the One, and more primal than the Monad" (*Contempl.* 2.2). However, in another place he states "the monad is in the category of the One God" (*Leg.* 2.2-3). If Philo posited the Monad (= Logos) and Dyad (= matter) with God transcending both, then his scheme essentially parallels the triad of Eudorus.

Logos

Sandmel writes: "at no time does Philo, in the abundance of what he has to say about the Logos, ever define Logos to us".[59] Goodenough understood the Logos through the concept of the Light-Stream proceeding from God;[60] Wolfson understood it through the concept of Nous.[61] It is perhaps better to understand Logos through the functions it serves in Philo's scheme. Firstly, it serves an epistemic role, providing a direct means for the apprehension of God.[62] Secondly, it is ascribed a demiurgic function as the "instrument" through which God made the world (*Leg.* 3.96),[63] making the Logos an active formative principle: but the Logos is not to be equated with the Demiurge, for this term is reserved for God (*Opif.* 36, 68, 138, etc.). Thirdly, the Logos is the totality of the Forms or that in which the Forms reside (*Opif.* 20). In a departure from the *Timaeus*, the Forms are not independent principles but are the thoughts of God; the intelligible creation that God used as a "most godlike model" for the creation of the sensible world (*Opif.* 16).[64] To this extent, the Logos may be equated with the divine mind.

Philo's Logos holds particular significance for early Christian thought in that several of the descriptions parallel those applied to Christ. For instance, the Logos is frequently described as the image of God (*Conf.*95-7, 146; *Somn.* 2:45; *Leg.* 3.96; cf. Gen 1:26-7). Philo also describes the Logos as the son and firstborn of God, while God is described as his Father (*Conf.* 63). Elsewhere the Logos is described as "the second god" (*Prov.* 1 = Eusebius, *PE* 7.21). This statement has sometimes been taken to imply that Philo held a form of polytheism or "binitarianism".[65] Neither opinion is likely since this is the only occurrence of the expression, extant only in this fragment.[66] It is used in exegesis of Gen 1:26-7 to avoid the implication that man is created in the image of God. In fact, Philo is committed to monotheism as an unshakeable axiom of his religion (cf. *Decal.* 65-69). Though the Logos is often called "God" (as are other powers), there is no sense in which the Logos has an independent divine existence. The issue, then, of whether the Logos is eternal or created (Philo says both)[67] is somewhat of an irrelevance; to talk of the eternity of the Logos is to talk of the eternity of divine reason; to talk of the creation of the Logos is to talk of the creation of the Forms.

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[59] Sandmel, *Philo*, 94.
[60] Goodenough, *Philo*, 100ff.
[61] Wolfson, *Philo*, 230f.
[62] Winston, *Philo*, 27f.
[63] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 159-161.
[64] Winston, *Philo*, 26; Sandmel, *Philo*, 94.
[65] Cf. F. Young, "Two Roots or a Tangled Mess?", in *The Myth of God Incarnate* (ed. J. Hick; London: SCM Press, 1977) 114.
[66] Cf. Runia, *Philo*, 442f.
[67] Cf. Wolfson, *Philo*, 234ff.

Sophia

One potential candidate for a third principle is Sophia, a seemingly female counterpart to the Logos. As a female principle, Dillon interprets Sophia as the Dyad "disguised".[68] Philo, however, never explicitly equated Sophia with the Dyad, and is adamant that Sophia is "both masculine and father", regardless of the gender of the word (*Fug.* 50-52). Whilst it is true that Philo describes Sophia as both "mother" and "nurse" (*Det.* 115-6; *Ebr*. 8, 31), terms in the *Timaeus* applied to matter (*Tim* 50D; 51A; 49 A; 52D),[69] yet Philo does not conceive of her as passive (like matter) but as instrumental in creation (*Fug.* 20, 109; *Det.* 16, 54) and supplying nourishment to all things (*Det.* 115-6). Nor is Sophia the source of evil and disorder as the Dyad of Eudorus. The inclusion of Sophia seems prompted primarily by Jewish Wisdom literature; if there is a secondary precedent in the Dyad then the concept has been much modified. Since Philo speaks separately of the Dyad there seems no compelling reason to suppose Philo identified them.

Nevertheless the precedents in the Wisdom literature would seem to justify only one principle secondary to God but Philo posits two (Sophia and Logos). This might indicate that Philo was aware of, and took prompts from, some other tradition that posited two principles after God (that is, a triad). If Philo identified the Logos as the divine mind then we might look for parallels in the God-Mind-Soul triad of later Platonists. However, again, evidence is lacking.

The relationship between Sophia and Logos is also not consistently described. *Fug.* 109 describes the Logos as proceeding from God and Sophia, as though she were some sort of divine consort, but elsewhere Logos and Sophia seem to be the same thing. Goodenough seeks to explain this apparent contradiction on the basis that Logos and Sophia are part of the same "Stream" issuing from God and thus any distinction is "only relative".[70] The truth may be a good deal simpler. Logos and Sophia are both products of the Wisdom tradition, and it is possible that Philo separates them for convenience. It is possible that, for Philo, there are no metaphysical principles behind the concepts of Logos and Sophia, and they are simply sustained periphrasis. Like the Logos, Sophia is personified and conceptually distinct from God but does not appear to be an independent being.

c. Plutarchof Chaeronea (c.40-120)[71]

Introduction

Plutarch was born into a prominent family in Chaeronea.[72] He was a prolific writer best known for his historical biographies, and towards the end of his life (c.100), he was initiated into the Delphic priesthood.[73] He went to Athens (c.66) to study mathematics

[68] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 164

[69] Wolfson attempts to explain the terms "mother" and "nurse" as Midrashic speculations on the meaning of the Hebrew word *amon* ("nursling")in Prov 8:30, reading instead *aman* ("artisan"), or *omen* ("nurse"), or even *imman* ("mother") (Wolfson, *Philo*, 267-9).

[70] Goodenough, *Philo*, 102.

[71] J. G. Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff: UWP, 1970) 16.

[72] D. A. Russell, *Plutarch* (London: Duckworth, 1973) 3.

[73] Griffiths, *De Iside et Osiride*, 16. He was initiated as priest of the temple of Apollo and he records that he danced in honour of Apollo (*Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs* 792F).

and philosophy at the Platonic Academy.[74] His teacher, Ammonius, was from Egypt[75] and is thought of as a representative of Alexandrian Platonism.[76] Ammonius taught that God is transcendent, above time or motion but always Being. He is not composite but pure and indestructible. This Being (τὸ ὄν) is also a One (τὸ ἕν).[77] The identification of God as τὸ ἕν, amongst other things, positions Ammonius within the Neopythagorean tradition.[78] Plutarch had a keen interest in all things Egyptian.[79]

Plutarch is a Platonist, in the sense that he endorses Platonism and rejects the teachings of the Stoics and Epicureans.[80] He does identify himself as a Pythagorean, (*De E* 387F) but this does not present an inconsistency since Plutarch viewed Plato as a follower of Pythagoras.[81] Plutarch did not regard himself as an original philosopher but as an interpreter of Plato.[82] His one noted deviation from, what he regards as, the teaching of other Platonists relates to the temporal creation of the world (*De E* 1012A), but inasmuch as there was no established Platonic orthodoxy at this time, he can hardly be regarded as heterodox.[83]

First God

We find theology in several of Plutarch's treatises and it is not immediately apparent that he intended these various accounts to be reconciled. In *On the E at Delphi* he (through Ammonius) presents God (= Apollo) as Being (τὸ ὄν), in contrast to Becoming; this would seem to be the transcendent and qualityless God of Alexandrian Platonism (*De E* 392ff). The God of *Isis and Osiris* is identified with Zeus as "the Ruler and Lord of all" (*De Is.* 381 B) and with Osiris as "King and Lord" (*De Is.* 355A).[84] There are indications of a negative theology, such as the idea that God does not speak (*De Is.* 381B); however, God is not qualityless and is "lacking in none of the virtues" (*Def .Or.* 423D). The pre-eminence of God is emphasized, making "foolish" the idea that God enters prophets to inspire them (*Def. Or.* 414E).

Yet the transcendence of God is not employed to argue for metaphysical mediators; God is an active agent in creation. Plutarch gives an argument for the creative action of God

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[74] Russell, *Plutarch,* 4-5. Plutarch must surely have defined himself primarily as a philosopher and teacher of philosophy, even though … the voluminous corpus that reaches us does not contain the systematic elaboration of a philosophical position" (R. Lamberton, *Plutarch* (New Haven: YUP, 2001) 26).

[75] Eunapius, uitae philosoph.454

[76] Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 184ff; cf. J. Whittaker, "Ammonius of the Delphic E", *CQ* 19:1 (1969) 185-192.

[77] For the thought of Ammonius we are dependent on the discourse put in his lips by Plutarch in *On the E at Delphi,* particularly 393A-C.

[78] Whittaker, "Ammonius", 189.

[79] Russell, *Plutarch,* 7.

[80] Lamberton, *Plutarch,* 33; Russell, *Plutarch,* 63. It is of interest that, though Plutarch's comments on early Stoics are usually censorious, he shares their fondness for Heraclitus whom he quotes frequently and many scholars believe Plutarch's ethics to be permeated by Stoic teaching. See J. P. Hershbell, "Plutarch and Heraclitus", *Hermes* 105.2 (1977) 179-201.

[81] J. Dillon, "Plutarch and Platonist Orthodoxy", *ICS* XIII.2 (1988) 364.

[82] Lamberton, *Plutarch,* 33.

[83] Dillon, 'Plutarch and Orthodoxy', 357-364.

[84] In *Isis and Osiris* Plutarch offers an allegorical interpretation of an Egyptian mythology. It is pertinent to ask to what extent *Isis and Osiris* reveals Plutarch's considered opinion and to what extent he is constrained by the structure of the mythology. Given that Plutarch is forced to make some unusual correspondences (e.g. the body of Osiris with the intelligible realm), it seems unlikely that Plutarch's Platonism is significantly altered. Unlike Philo and his interpretation of the Old Testament, Plutarch does not considered Egyptian mythology to be authoritative scripture.

from the rational arrangement of the world, based upon the Aristotelian concept of the Prime Mover (*De Fac.* 944E). In the same essay, God is identified as the "master-craftsman" (ἀριστοτέχνης; cf. *De Is.* 369D) and the "father-creator" (πατήρ δημιουργός). He is also identified as the Good (*Def. Or.* 423D; *De Is.* 372F). To this extent, all demiurgic activity is ascribed to God without appeal to intermediaries or instruments.

Fundamental to Plutarch's metaphysics is a strong dualism that exceeds that of other Platonists. This dualism stems from the argument that evil cannot precede from good and good cannot proceed from evil. Since the world is a mixture, revealing both good and evil, singularly and plurality, there must also be two causes or principles (ἀρχή; *De Is.* 369 D) and irrational motion must be the result of an evil world soul. In support of this position, Plutarch cites Plato (*Laws* 896D), Pythagoras, and Heraclitus (B51) as well as Zoroastrian religion. Though we found a similar duality in Eudorus, the Supreme One from which good and evil proceeds appears to be absent from Plutarch's scheme. Instead God is identified as the opposite to the Indefinite Dyad (*Def. Or.* 428F). God is thus the cause of good and is identified as the Good (*Def. Or.* 423D; *De Is.* 372F). The Dyad is identified as the irrational part of the soul of the universe (= Typhon; *De Is.* 371 B), and is the principle of disorder (*De Is.* 377A). The Dyad is not matter,[85] but pre-cosmic disorder, both body (σῶμα) and irrational soul (ψυχή) (*Proc. An.* 1014F). Matter is identified with the female principle of Nature (= Isis; *De Is.* 372E; 373F). This duality between God and the Dyad, by which God is sharply removed from any plurality, results in a hierarchy, whereby the divine nature (= intelligible world) is placed above the sensible world (see below). More recently, scholars have begun to recant the assertion of a strong dualism in the thought of Plutarch.[86] Plutarch's dualism seems confined to the sub-lunary realm (*De Is* 369C). The irrational soul is not equal with Mind (or God) but is subordinate; as a daimon is subordinate to a god (*De Is* 369D). Plutarch's dualism, then, does not posit a second deity in contrast to God, but merely "the existence in the universe of something rather more actively disruptive than purely passive matter".[87]

God is described as the rational part (= Osiris) of the world soul, in contrast to the irrational part (=Typhon), pre-cosmic disorder (*De Is.* 371B). God is thus the *logos* that the pre-cosmic disorder did not possess (*Proc. An.* 1014B). The use of the term *logos* here is ambiguous and it is not immediately clear whether God is the Logos (cf. Dillon) or merely a *logos* (as God is also a *nous*; *De Is.* 371A). Logos is a divine quality that is shared by men (*De Is.* 388C). Plutarch understands the divine nature as the intelligible world and equivalent with Plato's Forms and Paradigm (*De Is.* 373F), like Philo's Logos. There is no indication whether for Plutarch the Forms were the thoughts of God[88] or whether God (as rational world-soul) was directly equivalent with the totality of the Forms. God himself is the Paradigm for the world.

Identifying Osiris as both God and rational world-soul Plutarch appears to unify two things that other Platonists treat as distinct. This may be interpretative convenience. In

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[85] J. Dillon, "Plutarch of Chaeronea" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed. E. Craig; London: Routledge, 1998) 1:466; *pace* Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 199.

[86] E.g. J. Dillon, "Plutarch and God: Theodicy and Cosmogony in the Thought of Plutarch", in *Tradition of Theology: Studies in Hellenistic Theology, Its Background and Aftermath* (eds. D. Frede & A. Laks; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 234 (cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 202f).

[87] Dillon, "Plutarch and God", 233

[88] Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 201. The Forms are not a significant concept in Plutarch's writings, instead preferring the concept of the intelligible and the "image of the intelligible" (*De Is.* 373 AB) and the likeness of God (*De Sera* 550Dff).

some sense the rational part of the world soul emanates from God; Plutarch describes it as an "effluence" (ἀπόρροιαν) from God (*De Is.* 371 B). Plutarch describes these two aspects of God through the metaphors of the soul and of the body of Osiris; the former is God in his transcendent aspect, the latter is that effluence from God which orders the world soul.

Female Principle

As in Philo, we find a female principle in Plutarch, here associated with Isis. Again as in Philo, this female principle is called "nurse" (*De Is.* 372E; cf. *Tim* 49A) and Plutarch explicitly identifies her as the Receptacle of the Plato's *Timaeus* (*De Is.* 373F; 374A). Isis "yearns" for Osiris and offers him the opportunity to create. She is impregnated by his "effluxes" (ἀπορρὰς) and thus brings forth Creation (= Horus), which is "the image of Being in matter" (*De Is.* 372F). Just as Typhon dismembers Osiris and scatters the pieces, so the intelligible world is polluted by disorder and flux. As Isis gathers and reassembles the pieces, so this female principle brings order to the sensible world (cf. *De Is.* 377A).

For Plutarch, the female principle is not only matter but an active principle (ἀρχή). He is also adamant in contrast to "others" that this female principle is not opposed to God but clings to him in love (*De Is.* 374F). Presumably the reference is to those like Eudorus for whom the female principle was the Dyad and thus opposed to the Monad. It is not clear how far Plutarch is motivated in this regard by his attempts to interpret the Egyptian myth. It is significant that matter is not evil, nor the cause of evil, but an active principle alongside God. She is more like Philo's Sophia than Eudorus' Dyad.

The World

The third god in this Egyptian triad is Horus, identified by Plutarch with the sensible world and generation (*De Is.* 373F). He is the image of Being and thus could be said to be the image of God (cf. *Tim* 92C). However, though here personified as a god, the sensible world is not described as an active principle. Therefore, though Plutarch's exegesis is based upon a triad of gods, only Osiris and Isis are principles. But, if Osiris represents two principles, God and the rational world-soul, then we would have a triad similar to Philo's.

Second Triad

A second triad may be found in Plutarch's threefold division of the individual and of the cosmos. Plutarch argues that the individual is not simply body and soul, for such an individual would be irrational. Thus there must be a third division, the mind (νοῦς; *De Fac.* 943F). The three divisions of the individual are associated with three heavenly bodies. Plutarch teaches a double-death: the body dies upon the earth, the soul and mind then ascend to the Moon where the soul dies and the mind alone returns to the Sun, from where it was originally sown (*De Fac.* 945B). These fates are also associated with the three heavenly bodies: Atropos (Sun), Clotho (Moon) and Lachesis (Earth; *De Fac.* 945C).

In a second work, these three fates are reworked into a second scheme of the four divisions of the universe:

> Four principles (ἀρχαί) there are of all things: the first is of Life, the second is of Motion, the third of Generation, and the last is of Decay. The first linked to the second by the Monad, at the Invisible, the second to the third by Mind at the Sun, the third to the fourth by Nature at the

> Moon. A Fate, daughter of Necessity, holds keys and presides over each link: over the first, Atropos, over the second Clotho, and over the link at the Moon Lachesis. The turning-point of Generation is at the Moon (*De Gen* 591B).

Each fate has been elevated; now Atropos is associated with the Invisible Realm, Clotho with the Sun, and Lachesis with the Moon.

This passage presents us with a number of difficulties as none of the pieces of the scheme are clearly identified. This is just one of several passages where Plutarch enumerates the principles (e.g. *Def.Or.* 428D) and it is not clear how these passages relate. If we use the passage from *De Facie* to interpret the present passage then Nature might be equivalent to the soul, as it is associated with the Moon, just as Mind is associated with the Sun in both passages.[89] For the individual there is no level above Mind, but in this triad of principles there is no level below Soul/Nature, presumably because God does not have a body. Dillon urges that the Monad is also a mind, but this is not explicitly stated; the Monad would seem to transcend mind.

The role of Nature here is also problematic, as Plutarch uses the term in a variety of ways throughout his works. Nature sometimes features as the second active principle of creation, parting itself and bringing plurality (and thus destruction), which God then orders (*Def. Or.* 414D; 430E); thus Nature features here as the link between Generation and Decay. Elsewhere, Nature is described as the World Soul, presiding over the heavens and held in tension between order and disorder (*Proc. An*1026EF). As we have seen, Plutarch holds that there are two aspects to the World Soul: the rational (sometimes identified as Mind) and the irrational (*On Gen of the Soul* 1015e). These two correspond to the cause of good and the cause of evil respectively, which are both contained in Nature (*De Is.* 369D). We have then a triad of Monad, Mind and World Soul.

Kenney, discussing this passage, urges caution, asserting that this scheme "does not appear to have been adopted significantly into the general structure of Plutarch's theology".[90] However, I think it is possible to systematize this triad according to Plutarch's other principles. Monad is God in his transcendent aspect (= "soul of Osiris"). Mind is the Paradigm and the mind of God. Since Mind is already represented, Nature here must stand for the irrational soul only. That God is elsewhere described as a mind indicates that Mind is not conceived of as being truly independent of the Monad, but rather the rational aspect of God by which he creates (= "body of Osiris"). If Plutarch's dualism is maintained then the irrational soul (=Typhon) should be conceived of as something independent of Mind and Monad (=Osiris), and not the third member of a triad.

The reconsideration of Plutarch's dualism (see above) has inspired Radek Chlup to propose that Mind and the irrational soul are not independent principles but elements of the same principle.[91] In his speech, young Plutarch talks of Apollo and Dionysus in terms reminiscent of the duality between Mind and the irrational soul. Apollo is associated with order and similarity, whilst Dionysus is associated with change,

[89]Dillon, Middle Platonists, 215.
[90] J. P. Kenney, Mystical Monotheism: A Study in Ancient Platonic Theology (Hanover: BUP, 1991) 53.
[91] R. Chlup, "Plutarch's Dualism and the Delphic Cult", *Phronesis* 45.2 (2000) 138-158.

multiplicity and irregularity (*De E* 389AB).[92] The key lines for Chlup's theory are Plutarch's descriptions of Apollo undergoing "transformations of his person", whereby in one phase of his cycle he "becomes manifold in his form, his affects and his various powers" (*De E* 388EF). The implication is that Apollo and Dionysius are two aspects or phases of the same God.[93] Dillon is critical of this idea. Firstly, the cyclic view of Apollo seems based on Stoic ideas.[94] The Stoics understood God to be pure fire, and the gods had existence for a time within this fire, but were routinely destroyed at the *Ekpyrosis.* The idea in Plutarch's speech that Apollo and Dionysus are aspects of the same god seems to rest upon this Stoic doctrine (cf. "enkindles his nature into fire" *De E* 388F). Yet elsewhere, Plutarch rejects Stoicism and the concept of *Ekpyrosis*, as it conflicts with the Platonic concept of eternity.[95] Secondly, in *De E* the final word is given to Ammonius and thus it seems that it is his Apollo-Hades dualism, rather than the Apollo-Dionysus cycle, which is Plutarch's considered opinion on the topic.[96]

We are left with the question, however, of how independent the irrational soul is. It is not God, in the sense that Mind is God, but is this pre-cosmic disorder an independent principle in its own right? What are we to make of the statement that the "element of disorder" comes "from the regions above" (*De Is* 373AB)? Does it imply that the irrational soul is in some sense caused (created?) by God? Or is this phrase indebted to the Osiris-Typhon mythology, with no equivalent in Plutarch's metaphysical scheme? Plutarch does not seem to present us with the means to answer these questions.

d. The Athenian School

i. Nicostratus and Taurus

In the second century AD, followers of Plutarch dominated the Platonist activity in Athens. The first named philosopher, Claudius Nicostratus, need only detain us briefly. He seems to have preceded Calvenus Taurus in some role, though his precise activities are unknown. All that remains of his works are his attacks on Aristotle's *Categories,* which hold little relevance for our enquiry. He believed in the Forms and in distinction between the physical and intelligible worlds (Simplicius, *In Cat.* 73.15ff), but nothing else is recorded of his physics.[97] As the predecessor of Taurus, Nicostratus was a contemporary of the Christian philosopher, Aristides of Athens. Whether there was any connection between the two is impossible to judge from the extant information.

Of Calvenus Taurus, the head of the Platonic school in Athens c.145 AD, we know slightly more.[98] He wrote against Stoicism and Aristotelianism, demonstrating some inclination towards for the purity of Platonic doctrine, and also several commentaries.

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[92] "It would be strange if Plutarch decided to present through his own mouth a theory he would not in the least approve of" (Chlup, "Plutarch's Dualism", 141)

[93] Chlup, "Plutarch's Dualism", 141-2.

[94] Dillon, "Plutarch and God", 228-9; cf. F. E. Brenk, "Plutarch's Middle-Platonic God: About to Enter (or Remake) the Academy," in *Gott und die Götter bei Plutarch* (ed. Hirsch-Luipold;Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005) 31f;

[95] Dillon, "Plutarch and God", 224; "the young Plutarch is somewhat untypical of Plutarch's other writings" (Brenk, "Plutarch's God", 32). Chlup rejoins that the Stoics are not mentioned in Plutarch's speech, only "theologians", but this hardly seems ample defence (Chlup, "Plutarch's Dualism", 144-5).

[96] Dillon, "Plutarch and God", 229.

[97] Cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 233-236

[98] Cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 237--247

With regard to physics, Taurus is noteworthy for distinguishing four meanings of the word γενητός (usually translated "created")[99]as means of reconciling the apparent temporal creation taught in the *Timaeus* with the idea of an eternal world. The same kind of reasoning would later be used by Christian theologians attempting to reconcile the generation of the Son with the eternity of God.

ii. Atticus (c.176-180)[100]

Though Atticus may be reasonably regarded as the successor of Taurus, his name is frequently conjoined with Plutarch's (fr.19, 22-24), which suggests Plutarch may be a useful schema for the exegesis of Atticus' fragments. Atticus would have been a contemporary of the Christian philosopher Athenagoras of Athens, so we should not be surprised if we find reference to the Plutarch-Atticus brand of Platonism in the *Legatio* of Athenagoras. The fact that the works of Atticus were readily appropriated by Eusebius as a witness to the creative action of God says something about their reception amongst Christians.

Demiurge

Atticus held that the traditional Platonic triad of Matter, Demiurge and Forms were "interconnected principles" (fr.26). Atticus seemed much preoccupied with the Demiurge. This is evident not only from the testimonies of Proclus, which necessarily concern the *Timaeus,* but also in those fragments preserved by Eusebius written against the teaching of Aristotle (cf. fr.4, 9). As Edwards writes, "he read Plato through the lens of the *Timaeus,* and [that] creation was for him the act most characteristic of deity".[101] This being the case, it is not surprising that he should identify the Demiurge as the Good (fr.12), despite Proclus' scorn, and as the First God (fr.28).[102] It is towards the Good that souls must strive (fr.2). The Demiurge is also described as "the intelligible and oldest God" (fr.37) and "Father of all", "Lord" and "guardian" (fr.9). However, for all these titles, there is no hint that God is beyond Being or otherwise transcendent: Atticus seems to have had an immanent view of God.[103] Indeed, Atticus criticizes Aristotle for his denial of Providence, implied by the idea that the Prime Mover does not involve himself in the affairs of the world – "an absentee god".[104]

Atticus, alongside Plutarch, is marked by Proclus as teaching a temporal creation (fr. 19, 20, 23), presumably based upon a literal reading of the *Timaeus.* His account of creation may be reconstructed from the testimonies of Proclus. Prior to creation is matter, and matter is ungenerated (fr.24), moved by the irrational soul (fr.26). The Demiurge creates the cosmos by assimilating "all things to himself, rendering them good" (fr.13), and thus matter is reduced to order (fr.23). Each (sensible) thing is created by the Demiurge

[99]John Philoponus, *On the Eternity of the World*, p145, 13ff.
[100] Atticus had his *floruit* 176-180 AD (according to Eusebius) and probably held the 'chair' of Platonic philosophy established in Athens by Marcus Aurelius. P. Kalligas, "Platonism in Athens during the first two centuries AD: an overview", *Rhizai* 2 (2004) 49; Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 148. For fragments see E. Des Places, *Atticus: Fragments* (Paris: Belle Lettres, 1977).
[101]M. J. Edwards, *Culture and Philosophy in the Age of Plotinus* (London: Duckworth, 2006) 17.
[102]J. Opsomer, 'Demiurges in Early Imperial Platonism', in *Gott und die Götter bei Plutarch* (ed. R. Hirsh-Luipold; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 53f. Atticus may have found support for equating the Demiurge with the Good in *Tim* 29A2-3, where the Demiurge is called 'good'.
[103]H. F. Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria and the beginnings of Christian apophaticism* (Oxford: OUP, 2006)131.
[104]Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", 74.

looking to "their paradigmatic causes", presumably the Forms (fr.13).[105] The irrational soul participates with the Nous and is rendered rational, and thus produces ordered motion (fr.23).

Nous and Soul(s)

Like Plutarch, Atticus identified Nature and the World Soul. The World Soul is the "one common principle" by which the universe is beautifully and rationally arranged (fr.8.17-18). Dillon sees this "common principle" as the Logos, though Atticus never uses the term.[106] This Soul has demiurgic function; indeed it is necessary that it is a Soul that creates, because all motion presupposes a soul (cf. fr.23).

A number of scholars, following Dorrie, have attributed a divine soul to the Demiurge.[107] Like Plutarch, Atticus posited two souls based upon *Laws*, a maleficent soul which moves pre-cosmic matter and a "boniform" soul, which oversees rational motion (fr.23). The phrase "divine soul" (θεία ψυχή) is ascribed to Atticus (fr.35), and if a human mind cannot exist with a soul (fr.7), we might assume that the divine Nous cannot exist without a divine soul. On the other hand, Atticus' account of creation describes the participation of the maleficent soul with the Nous (fr.23); this becomes the rational (or "boniform") soul (cf. Plutarch).[108] The reconciliation of these disparate ideas comes in the distinction between the pre- and post-cosmic. Prior to creation there exists matter and the irrational soul, and facing them God (and the Forms). During creation, the Forms are imposed upon matter and the Nous upon the irrational soul. Thus after creation, we have the world (matter + forms) and the World Soul (irrational soul + nous). This emphasizes Atticus' view of Providence and the immanent participation of God in the world. There does not seem sufficient justification for the view that there is a divine soul separate from the World Soul, nor any indication that Nous is separable from the Demiurge. Therefore, there is no strong triadic conception in Atticus. We might diagnose a weak triadic conception of God-Nous-Soul, though Atticus himself did not enumerate such a triad.

iii. Harpocration of Argos (c.180)[109]

Harpocration of Argos is described as a pupil of Atticus, but his name and ideas are also often connected with that of Numenius. This would have made him an interesting example of how Numenius's ideas were received had but more of Harporcration's own

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[105] Atticus' view of the Forms has been disputed. Some believe he held the Forms to be a separate principle from the Demiurge (Proclus, *In Tim* 1.394.2-3 = fr.28; cf. Kenney, *Mystical Monotheism,* 88) and others that the Forms were the thoughts of God (Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 255-6). Karamonlis proposes that Atticus posited the Forms in the divine soul, based upon the testimony of Syrianus (fr.40; G. E. Karamanolis, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement?: Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry* (Oxford: OUP, 2006) 170; cf. Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria,* 118; cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 256). Atticus in his own words preserved by Eusebius, describes the Forms as "God's conceptions (νοήματα)" (fr.9). Atticus held the Forms as separate principles alongside God and Matter, no doubt based upon his reading of the *Timaeus.* Nevertheless the Forms are for him secondary causes (παραίτια; fr. 9.43), subordinate to God and posited within the mind of God.

[106] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 252.

[107] see Opsomer, "Demiurges", 74ff; cf. Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria,* 118; Karamanolis, *Plato and Aristotle,* 169.

[108] Deuse asserts that the rational soul is a blend of the irrational soul and the divine soul, not the intellect, but fr.23 says intellect.

[109] Harpocration of Argos is described as a pupil of Atticus (Proclus, *In Tim* 1.305.6), and is thus assigned by Dillon a *floruit* of c. 180 AD (Dillon, 259). The fragments of Harpocration are collected in J. Dillon, 'Harpocration's Commentary on Plato: Fragments of a Middle Platonic Commentary', *CSCA* 4 (1971) 125-146.

writings survived. The fragment relevant to our investigation is from Proclus (*In Tim* 304.23-305.6).

Proclus' account of Harpocration is not particularly favourable and needs to be treated with caution. Opsomer judges it is "too muddled and polemical for us to get any precise reliable information about Harpocration's views".[110] For instance, Proclus cites with great significance the fact that Harpocration names his first god Zeus, Kronos and Ouranos. Such a charge would be effective were Harpocration interested in the traditional Greek pantheon, but as a Platonist it seems far more likely that he used these names, as others did, as useful pins on which to hang philosophical concepts. We should be cautious of giving too great a significance to what may prove to be the exegete's deference to the wording of different texts on different occasions. Thus in describing his first god as Kronos, he may be doing no more than illustrating that the first god is father of the Demiurge, whereas when he describes his first god as Zeus it is with regard to his kingship.[111] It is not clear which part of Harpocration's commentary these ideas may have come from. Indeed, it seems likely that it is a conflation of two separate passages. Dillon relates this passage to *Timaeus* 28C, where Numenius found two gods ("maker and father"). This being so, Harpocration's first god would be "father" and his second god "maker". Dillon also relates two other passages: *Cratylus* 396A-C, where the etymology of "Zeus", "Kronos" and "Ouranos" are discussed; and *Phaedrus* 246Eff, where Zeus is described as commander in heaven.[112] Neither passage sheds much light on the formulation of Harpocration's triad.

The first god is the father (cf. Numenius), and is thus called "Ouranos" (Father-Sky). He is also father of the Demiurge (thus "Kronos"). As king of the intelligible world, he is presumably to be identified with the Good, the chief of the Forms, though this is not stated. It is not clear whether Harpocration did identify one or all of his gods with the first principle of the *Parmenides* (142A); this seems to be a polemic device of Proclus, criticising Harpocration for appearing to ascribe names and attributes to the first god.

The second god is the Demiurge. He is also named "Ruler" (ἀρχων), a name seemingly without precedent in Platonism. Dillon notes that Basilides describes the Demiurge as ὁ μέγας ἀρχων,[113] but it seems better to contrast ἀρχων with βασιλέυς as reference to an official below the rank of king (cf. Neh 12:7 [LXX]; Matt 9:18).[114] The term may be an innovation of Harpocration, distinguishing the Demiurge from the King whilst maintaining his pre-eminence over the cosmos. Proclus declares that Harpocration makes the Demiurge double, following Numenius. Proclus misrepresents Numenius, for whom the second and third gods were the Demiurge; not the first and second as Proclus assumes, so we have reason to doubt the testimony of Proclus. However, if Harpocration truly followed Numenius on this issue, we may assume that for him the second and third gods comprised his double-Demiurge.

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[110]Opsomer, "Demiurges", 69.

[111] Later Plotinus will use the Kronos myth to describe the three hypostases: Ouranos as the One, Kronos as the Intellect and Zeus as the World Soul (*Enneads* V.8.13).

[112] Dillon, "Harpocration's Commentary", 144

[113] Dillon, "Harpocration's Commentary", 145, citing Hip. *Ref* X.14.6. In the NT, ἀρχων is used of the devil (Jn 12:31, 14:30, 16:11; cf. Mt 12:24; cf. Dillon), it is also used of Christ (Rev 1:5); neither of these usages is likely to have inspired Harpocration.

[114]However, of the nine chief magistrates in Athens, it was the first that was called ὁ Ἄρχων and the second who was called ὁ Βασιλέυς.

The third god is called "Heaven" and "Cosmos", which are not particularly informative. It is likely that this third god is equivalent with the third god of Numenius, and thus the lower aspect of Demiurge; possessing the role of World Soul, or something like it.

f. Handbooks and Sophists

i. Alcinous[115]

Alcinous is no longer identified with Albinus;[116] we can give no biographical details about Alcinous beyond the name.[117] His handbook, the *Didaskalikos*, might be thought of as the standard teaching of one or other school of Platonism, if only we could identify that school with certainty.[118] Its philosophy is Middle Platonic and so it may be plausibly dated to the second century, though as a handbook it may lag behind innovations. The *Didaskalikos* shows signs of being influenced by Aristotelianism, perhaps following a wider trend in contemporary Platonism.[119]

Primal God

Alcinous lists the Platonic first principles as Matter (8.1), the Forms (9.1) and God (10.1). Matter is eternal, having no shape or quality, but it is the Receptacle of the Forms and is imprinted by them with shape and quality. The Forms are the eternal and perfect thoughts of God, so it is not clear why Alcinous treats them as a separate principle, except from custom (cf. Atticus).[120] Though Alcinous consistently speaks of "God", singular and without predicate, there are (at least) two gods in Alcinous' system, not to mention the "created gods" (cf. 15:1f). After several paragraphs discussing likeness to God (28:1-3), he interjects with a qualification: "by which we mean, obviously, the god in the heavens, not, of course, the god above the heavens". It is presumably for this reason that Alcinous introduces the term "primal God" (10:2) and "primary intellect" (10:3) to distinguish the supreme god from any other, and yet he never introduces a second god. Consequently the reader is left to speculate about what "God" refers to in any given chapter.

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[115] For English translation of the *Didaskalikos* see Dillon's *Alcinous.*

[116] J. Whittaker, "*Parisinus Graecus* 1962 and the Writings of Albinus: Part 2", *Phoenix* 28:4 (1974) 454-6; J. Whittaker, "Platonic Philosophy in the Early Centuries of the Empire", *ANRW* 36.1 (1987).

[117] Two individuals named "Alcinous" are known (Philostratus, p40.23; Photius, *Bibl.* 48.11b19) but we have no basis on which to make an identification.

[118] Attempts to link Alcinous with Apuleius have been unconvincing. Göransson writes "the two authors have only one source in common, namely, a summary of Platonic ethics" (Göransson, *Albinus,* 229). There are compelling parallels between *Didask* 12 and Arius Didymus fr.1 (Eusebius, *Pr.Ev.* 11.23.3-6; Stobaeus I.12.135f); these parallels have been explained by either mutual dependence upon an epitome of *Timaeus* (R. E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1937) 79) or upon an earliest handbook which Alcinous updates (Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 269) or direct dependence (Dillon, *Alcinous,* xxix). Göransson has even suggested that Arius may have followed Alcinous (Göransson, *Albinus,* 202). It seems most plausible that Alcinous bases his text on a range of sources, which may explain the inconsistencies in the *Didaskalikos.* If Alcinous based his handbook to any extent on the work of a Stoic (i.e. Arius) then we may question whether Alcinous was himself a Platonist or even conversant with contemporary Platonists (Cf. Whittaker, "Platonic Philosophy", 100-2).

[119] Merlan, "Greek Philosophy",65; Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 283; J. H. Loenen, "Albinus' Metaphysics.An Attempt at Rehabilitation", *Mnemosyne* 9 (1956)313.

[120] Since Alcinous describes the primal God as thinking himself, Armstrong interprets Alcinous as identifying the thought with its object and, therefore, for God to think himself is to think the Forms (A. H. Armstrong, "The Background of the Doctrine 'that the Intelligibles are not outside the Intellect" in *Les Sources de Plotin*(ed. E. R. Dodds; Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1960) 402).

The primal God is conceived of as the "finest" of intellects, eternally engaged in thinking itself and the Forms (10:3). Indeed, for Alcinous the first cause must be an intellect, since the Forms are objects of intellection (9:1-10:1).[121] The primal God is defined negatively by Alcinous: he is "more or less beyond description" (10:1); "ineffable", without attributes or qualities, excepting that "he is not deprived of any quality which might accrue to him" (10:4). The first consequence of this negative theology is that the primal God may only be known by intellect; either by induction, abstraction or analogy: human intellect clouded by sense-perception can never acquire any pure conception of the intelligibles, or of God himself. The second consequence is the familiar problem of God's relation with the world, here expressed in the Aristotelian terminology of the Unmoved Mover: "he neither moves anything, nor is he himself moved" (10.4). There is room for, indeed there is a need for, an intermediary; but does Alcinous posit one?

A Second Intellect?

Much is made of the following lines:

> Since intellect is superior to soul, and superior to potential intellect there is actualized intellect, which cognizes everything simultaneously and eternally, and finer than this again is the cause of this and whatever it is that has an existence still prior to these, this it is that would be the primal God, being the cause of the eternal activity of the intellect of the whole heaven (10.2)

There appears to be some kind of hierarchy at work here, but scholars have disagreed as to whether an ontological hierarchy or a hierarchy of values is intended. For instance, Dillon (1977) equated the actualized intellect with the First God; the soul with the World Soul and in between, a demiurgic intellect.[122] Turner goes further, finding three intellects above the World Soul.[123] Loenen, on the other hand, considers this to be a hierarchy of value, stating that intellect in general is superior to soul in general. [124] Dillon (1993) seems to blend these two approaches, taking potential intellect to be human intellect and actualized intellect as the cosmic intellect.[125]

It seems to me that this passage is only intelligible if it borne in mind that Alcinous is not intending a list of value or of being *per se,* but intends to present an argument for the primal God; an argument familiar to both Maximus of Tyre (Or. 11.8) and Plotinus (En. V.9.4). The argument has at its basis Aristotle's comment in *De Anima* 3.5, where he distinguishes two types of intellect; potential and actual. He argues that "that which acts is always superior to that which is affected", whilst "potential knowledge ... [is] not prior even in time in general" (3.5.19-22). Furthermore, he describes the actual as "being in essence activity" (18) and thinking eternally (22-24). Alexander of Aphrodisias interpreted Aristotle as stating that there must be an active intellect that actualizes the potential intellect, and Alexander identified this active intellect with the divine intellect of the *Metaphysics.*[126] Alcinous takes it as evident that intellect is "superior" (by which

[121] I believe Merlan to be incorrect when he says, because Alcinous positions his First God above a second intellect that "Albinus (sic) is on the way to elevating the supreme god above intelligence , but stops before reaching this goal" (Merlan, "Greek Philosophy",66). For Alcinous, the First God is not above intellect but is the finest intellect.

[122] Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 284; cf. Merlan, "Greek Philosophy",66

[123] Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 380

[124] Loenen, "Albinus' Metaphysics", 307; cf. Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria,* 99; cf. Dillon, *Alcinous,* 102;

[125] I am not sure in what way it helps us to equate potential intellect with human intellect (*pace* Dillon, *Alcinous*, 102).

[126] Witt, *Albinus,* 126; Dillon, *Alcinous,* 102; D. J. O'Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 34;

he means prior) to the soul[127] and that the intellect requires the existence of a prior intellect. If Alcinous follows the argument of Alexander then this prior intellect would be a divine intellect, which "cognizes everything simultaneously and eternally". The cause of this divine intellect is the primal God. The second intellect is described as "the intellect of the whole heaven", who is moved by the primal God "as the object of desire moves desire", with the primal God remaining unmoved (10.2).

There is an inconsistency between the theological and cosmological portions of the book. In chapter 10 Alcinous describes the primal God as ineffable, unmoved, moving nothing – but in chapters 12 onwards God is described as creating the world, following the *Timaeus* closely. Though the ineffable and demiurgic aspects of God seem contradictory, Alcinous never attempts to reconcile them; in both sections God is described as being the father of all things (10:3, 16:2). The most likely explanation for this disparity is that these two sections derive from different sources and Alcinous did not care to harmonize them.[128] Whilst this does not present Alcinous as thinker in a very good light, it may be indicative of the transition taking place in Platonic thought. Certain Platonists, like those on whom Alcinous bases his work, were incorporating Aristotlean ideas of the divine intellect into their conceptions of God. Attempts to reconcile an ineffable, unmoved God with the Demiurge may, in part, have been responsible for the positing of a second demiurgic intellect. Whilst it would make sense of Alcinous to identify the second intellect as the Demiurge, he never does so explicitly.

A Third Intellect?

According to Alcinous, the World Soul has an intellect that is awakened and ordered by the primal God (10:3; 14:3). This intellect of the World Soul is eternal, as is the World Soul itself, but it is "created" by the primal God in the sense that he awakened it. If the sleeping intellect of the World Soul is a potential intellect, then it must be actualized by a prior intellect (see above), which might lead us to conclude that it is the second (divine) intellect that causes a third intellect (of the World Soul). However, Alcinous says that the intellect of the World Soul is caused by the primal God (10.3), which implies that the second intellect is the intellect of the World Soul.

It is also not clear whether Alcinous views this intellect as an entity separate from the World Soul[129] or as a function of the World Soul.[130] Alcinous does refer to two gods, one above the heavens and one in the heavens. Since the World Soul is described as a created god "within the heavens", it is possible that the World Soul is one of the two. It might seem strange for the World Soul to be considered as an exemplar for men to follow (28:1-3), but as the World Soul and its intellect is "turned towards" the primal God and "striving to attain to his thoughts" (14:3), it may be that it participates in some way in the primal God (= the Good), and so is his image (though Alcinous never says as much).

In the *Didaskalikos* the relationship between God, the Intellect and the World Soul is never clearly or consistently defined. On the one hand, we are told that the World Soul is eternal and not created, but roused as if from sleep and brought to order (14:3; cf. 10.3). On the other hand, we are told God endowed the world with a soul and an intellect, wishing to make the world the best (14.4; cf. "cause" 10:3). It seems more probable that

[127]This is in contrast to the Stoics who argued the soul was prior to intellect.
[128] Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria,* 102; cf. Witt, *Albinus,* 133; cf. Göransson, *Albinus,* 132
[129] Dillon, *Alcinous,* 103.
[130] Loenen, "Albinus' Metaphysics", 306; Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria,* 100-1;

the former is Alcinous's considered opinion and is included as an attempt to qualify the talk of "creation" that he finds in the *Timaeus.* Therefore, unlike Atticus, who thought that God imposes his intellect on the World Soul, Alcinous thought God rouses a pre-existing intellect. Regardless of how poorly Alcinous defines their relationship, he does bear witness to a triad of God-Intellect-World Soul, though it is likely the latter two are regarded as being one God.

ii. Apuleius of Madaura (c.150)[131]

Lucius Apuleius, like Maxmimus of Tyre, pleads the cause of philosophy in general, though he has a special preference for Socrates and Plato. He is not a school-philosopher and often fudges technical distinctions.[132] For our purposes it is his *De Deo Socratis* and *De Platone et eius Dogmate* that are most useful as sources for contemporary Platonism.

Supreme God

Apuleius posits as three principles God, Forms and Matter (*De Platone* I.5), though he spends little enough time considering the Forms.[133] His doctrine of creation is familiarly Platonic: disorderly matter is stamped with the Forms and so brought to order by God, "the fabricator of the world" (I.7). Apuleius seems to fudge the issue of the temporality of creation, saying on the one hand that "it has always existed" and on the other that its eternal existence is contingent upon the providence of God, implying that is was created (I.8). The lack of clarity with which Apuleius addresses the question is probably indicative of ongoing disagreement amongst Platonists on the issue.[134]

In several works Apuleius gives descriptions of (Supreme) God: (De Platone I.190f; Apol. 64; De Deo Socrat. 124; De mundo 342f). "Apuleius is not content to churn out a standard list, but fits what he has to say about the supreme god to its context".[135] Nevertheless, we can draw out some common characteristics from these passages. God transcends time and space; he is the creator of all that is, and is immutable. Human language is insufficient to name him properly and he can only be apprehended by thought.[136] Apuleius makes the familiar distinction between the intelligible and the sensible (I.6). The intelligible realm consists of *deus primus, mens, formaeque, anima* (1.6). Merlan takes this as evidence of a hierarchy of First God; Intellect (=Second God);[137] and World Soul, with the Forms coordinated by the Intellect (and not God).[138] I would view this as a hasty conclusion given the paucity of the evidence. Apuleius has far more to say about daemonology than he does about any intermediary intellect.

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[131]Apuleius was born in Madaura (N. Africa) around 123. He received a rhetorical education in Madaura, before travelling to Athens to seek a broader education. Studying in Athens around 150, places him contemporary with Taurus (Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 308). For discussion of the works of Apuleius and his Platonism see B. L. Hijmans, "Apuleius, Philosophus Platonicus", *ANRW*2:36 (1987).

[132] For example, he says God is both *caelestis* and *ultramundanus* (cf. *De Platone* 190, 204). Hijmans writes "because he is not interested in determining precise positions on points of detail – or even refuses to do so – the extant works show many vague formualation and even inconsistent terminology" (Hijmans, "Apuleius", 470).

[133] In *Asclepius* there are only two principles, God and Matter (Hijmans, "Apuleius", 440).

[134]Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", 71.

[135] Hijmans, "Apuleius", 438

[136] Hijmans, "Apuleius", 438

[137] Merlan proposes that the term *deus primus* "suggests the term second god for the intellect" (Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", 71).

[138] Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", 70

A Second Intellect?

There are two possible references to a second intellect. At *De Platone* I.6 Apuleius lists Intellect (*mens*) separately from both God and Soul (see above), and again at II.1 he lists the primary good things as the Supreme God and the Intellect. But Apuleius also describes the World Soul as an intellect (*mens*), and it is not clear to what extent he separates the two.[139] Apuleius may have viewed the World Soul as an intellect, though since they are at times distinguished, it is more likely he viewed the World Soul as being possessed of an intellect.

It may be that I.6 and II.1 refer to a third intellect distinct from both God and Soul.[140] For many scholars this question turns on the question of whether the Supreme God can be identified with the creator. For instance, Turner writes that Apuleius' descriptions of the transcendence of God almost amount to "Numenius's first inactive god who, therefore, must be distinguished from the artificer".[141] Whilst Apuleius describes God as "liberated from all necessity of acting" (*De Deo.* 124), he also says he is the "creator of all things" (*De Plat.* 164). Yet there is no reason to suppose Apuleius perceived the tension between these two descriptions. In the *Apology* he describes God as building without labour (64). Elsewhere Apuleius describes the World Soul as the mover of things, executing the commands of God (*De Plat.* I.9). Describing the World Soul as the "fountain of all souls", he ascribes to the World Soul "the role reserved in the *Timaeus* for the Demiurge, that of creator of individual souls".[142] In addition, the World Soul is described as having "generative power", so it seems reasonable to assume that Apuleius understood the World Soul to be God's intermediary in creation. He also speaks of a *spiritus* in the *mundus* (cf. *anima mundi; De Platone* 1.198-199), which seems to be "a second god who is identical with the cosmos" (cf. *diuinus orbis*; *De Platone* 1.204).[143]

Triads

Apuleius makes several threefold divisions (*De Platone* 1.11). For instance, he says there are three species of "animals": those of fire (sun, moon, stars); those of air (daemons); and those of water and earth (mortals). He also says there are three species of "gods": the supreme god, the celestial gods, and the *medioxumi* (cf. *De Deo* 1.115ff). This tripartition Apuleius "obviously thought Platonic",[144] perhaps on the basis of Plato's second letter, which he quotes in another context (*Apol.* 64). The supreme God is the father of the celestial gods (*De Deo.* 124; cf. "paternal God" *De Plat.* I.12), and delivers the regulation of the world to them. The celestial gods which possess the stars (*De Plat.*I.11; *De Deo.* 116) are identified as the traditional gods. Again, Apuleius views the relationship between the supreme god and his intermediate gods as Platonic, though one wonders to what extent this is an apologetic strategy to preserve a role for the traditional gods.[145] Below the celestial gods are the daemons, which are influenced by the will of the celestial gods and may be worshipped and receive prayers (*De Deo* 133ff). Apuleius is exercised particularly by the need for intermediaries between God and the world, but for Apuleius these intermediaries are the celestial gods and the daemons.

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[139] Cf. Hijmans, "Apuleius", 457
[140] Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 465
[141] Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", 72
[142]Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 316.
[143] Hijmans, "Apuleius", 440
[144] Hijmans, "Apuleius", 426
[145] Hijmans, "Apuleius", 424

Despite his tripartition of the universe and of the gods, Apuleius nowhere implies that there is associated with each level a single deity or mind. Apuleius bears witness to the triad familiar from Alcinous of God-Intellect-World Soul, where the latter two are regarded as a single god.

g. Neopythagoreans

i. Pythagoreanism from 3rd to 1st centuries BC

The term "Neo-Pythagoreanism", a modern category, may be defined as "those thinkers in the Platonic tradition who derived Plato's philosophy from Pythagoras".[146] The revival of the interest in the teachings ascribed to Pythagoras, which began around the third century BC, had significant influence on Middle Platonism. This "Pythagorizing" of Platonism probably began with Plato himself, as Aristotle records. Symptomatic of the revival of Pythagoreanism is the production of an extensive body of pseudonymous works, ascribed to famous Pythagoreans.[147] The key shift represented by this literature is the positing of a principle higher than the two opposite principles of Pythagoras (and of the later Plato). In one passage Syrianus ascribes this doctrine to Philolaus, Brontinus and Archaenetus (*In Met* 165.33-166), each probably representing a pseudonymous work of this period. Particularly significant is the concept of a cause that is above intelligence and above being. Syrianus also reports that Ps-Brotinus (and Plato) identifies the One with the Good (*In Met.* 183). It is possible that the equation of the Pythagorean One with the Platonic Good was the basis of the doctrine of the transcendence of the One.[148]

We find a similar triad in *On Principles,* ascribed to Archytas of Tarentum.[149] The basis of the text is the two principles (ἀρχας) of Philolaus (fifth century); Limiting and Unlimited (cf. DK 44 B1-3). Limiting is identified with Form and Unlimited is identified with Matter, thus labelling Pythagorean principles with Aristotelian terminology (cf. Arist. *Met.*A6.988a7-15). These principles are regarded by Ps-Archytas as the cause of good and evil respectively. There is also a third, unifying principle, superior to the others and called "God". This superior principle is described as being above intelligence and is described as the Artificer (τεχνίταν); Form is his Artifice (τέχναν). It is debated how to interpret the introduction of this third unifying principle above the Pythagorean principles of Limiting and Unlimited. Given the Aristotelian terminology, the temptation is to relate this to Aristotle's criticism of Plato's two principles that there must be a cause above (Arist. *Met.*A9.991b5-992b7). Ps-Archytas does not call God the Prime Mover, nor would Aristotle have agreed that God is above intelligence, so we must be cautious. Nevertheless, we need not see Ps-Archytas as responding directly to Aristotle's promptings, but simply as a product of the Aristotlean milieu that held the necessity of a first cause. Eudorus (see above) seems to have followed this shift in Pythagoreanism, [150]

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[146] C. H. Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A Brief History* (Cambridge: Hackett, 2001) 94; C. Reidweg, *Pythagoras: His Life, Teaching and Influence* (trans. S. Rendell; London: CoUP, 2005), 124.

[147] The fragments of these writers are collected in H. Thesleff, *The Pythagorean Texts of the Hellenistic Period* (Åbo Akademi, 1965).

[148]Cf. J. M. Rist, "The Neoplatonic One and Plato's *Parmenides*", *TAPA* 93 (1963) 397-8.

[149] Archytas was a fourth century Pythagorean and king, but the work is certainly pseudonymous given its use of Aristotelian terminology. C. A. Huffman, *Archytas of Tarentum: Pythagorean, philosopher and mathematician king* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005) 597.

[150] Rist asserts that Eudorus is interpreting the teaching of the Pythagoreans incorrectly. According to Rist the (Neo)Pythagoreans posited a single One that performed a dual function as supreme cause and as cause with the Dyad; Eudorus misinterprets this doctrine as though there were two Ones (Rist, "Neoplatonic

though his relationship to Ps-Archytas is debated.[151] Whilst appearing to come from two different thought-worlds: Aristotelian (Ps-Archytas) and Platonic (Eudorus), they seem to bear witness to the same impulse to posit a principle above the Pythagorean opposites. Eudorus ascribes his doctrine to the Pythagoreans, so it seems likely that he is dependent on some Pythagorean work.[152]

ii. Thrasyllus (d. 36 AD)

Though Thrasyllus may have been one of the most important figures in the development of Platonism, the information we have about him is woefully inadequate. He came from Mendes (Egypt), and thus some connection with Alexandria is often presumed,[153] but he was on the island of Rhodes when encountered by Tiberius, who employed Thrasyllus as his astrologer in Rome (Suet. *Tib.*14; Tac. *Ann.* VI.20). Thrasyllus ordered Plato's dialogues in tetralogies in a new edition, and thus "probably had considerable power to make undetected alterations or additions to those parts of Plato's text that were not already well known".[154] Thrasyllus is grouped by Longinus with Moderatus, Numenius and Cronius as forerunners of Plotinus and Amelius, and is accounted as professing Pythagoreanism. Sadly, although Thrasyllus wrote "on the first principles of Pythagoreanism and Platonism" (Porph.*Vit.Plot.*20), little of his thought has survived.

We have some clues to his philosophy. Harold Tarrant in *Thrasyllan Platonism* argued that several fragments in later works can be ascribed to Thrasyllus. One of these passages, in Porphyry's commentary of Ptolemy's *Harmonics,* describes a theory of *logos*.[155] Particularly interesting is his ascription of *logos* to the cosmos-moving god "like some holy knowledge and thought process" (*Harm.* 3.3-5.9).[156]This *logos*, whilst not personified, is also described as the vehicle of the Forms, which implies the Forms are the thoughts of God.[157]

The second passage Tarrant associates with Thrasyllus is an early interpretation of the *Parmenides* recounted by Proclus (*In Parmenidem* 1057.5ff). This association must be tentative since the name Thrasyllus isn't used in passage; the interpretation is obliquely ascribed to a philosopher of Rhodes.[158] We will see that the interpretation of *Parmenides* was important for Moderatus, so the possibility of a pre-Moderaton interpretation of *Parmenides* is inviting; Thrasyllus did place the *Parmenides* at the head of the third tetralogy, along with other books about the supreme principle. The Rhodian philosopher's scheme is a hierarchy of the (1) One, (2) intelligence, (3) objects of reason (*dianoeta*), (4) bodily forms and (5) the receptacle. There are clear parallels here with the scheme of Moderatus. Whilst this is not a triad of either gods or intellects, there seem to be three things in the intelligible realm and a further two in the sensible realm.

One", 391-7). However we have already seen that Pythagoreans like Ps-Archytas and Ps-Brotinus posited a principle higher than the pair of opposites.

[151]H. Thesleff, An Introduction to the Pythagorean Writings of the Hellenistic Period (Åbo Akademi, 1961), 48n2; Dillon, Middle Platonists, 120; Kahn, Pythagoras, 77.

[152]Cf. *Pythagorean Notebooks*, DK 58 B1a; Kahn, *Pythagoras,* 80; Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 127; also see Thesleff, *Pythagorean Writings,* 48n2;

[153] Cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 184.

[154] H. Tarrant, *Thrasyllan Platonism* (Ithaca, NY: CoUP, 1993) 5.

[155] Tarrant, Thrasyllan Platonism, 108.

[156] Tarrant argues that this cosmos-moving god is described in immanent terms and is probably conceived of a secondary god. He draws the parallel with *Letter* 6 (323d) where a distinction is made between the "governor and cause" and his "lordly father" (Tarrant, *Thrasyllan Platonism,* 114).

[157] Tarrant, Thrasyllan Platonism, 116.

[158] Tarrant, Thrasyllan Platonism, 167ff.

iii. Plato's Second Letter (before 36 AD)

> Upon the king of all do all things turn; he is the end of all things and the cause of all good. Things of the second order turn upon the second principle, and those of the third order upon the third. (*Letters* 312e [Morrow])

In this enigmatic paragraph in the second letter, we have one of the earliest expressions of what will become the Neoplatonic triad. It is cited by Justin (1 Apol 60.6-7) and subsequent Christian writers. The "king" is undoubtedly equivalent to the Good as "the cause of all good".[159] The roles of the second and the third respectively are undefined, except that things of the second and third order "turn" upon them – we have no clue as to what these "things" might be. According to the letter, the soul longs to understand the nature of these three and this question causes much trouble, as if with the pains of childbirth (312e-313a). Our only clue as to the nature of these three is that they are unlike anything akin to the "soul of man", perhaps indicating that the second and the third are, like the Good, incorporeal. If this teaching is from Plato then it is without parallel throughout the Platonic corpus.

There have been various attempts by scholars to identify the three, e.g. Good – Intellect – Soul; Good – Forms – World Soul; Names – Definitions – Ideas (cf. 342a).[160] Morrow, basing his argument upon *Timaeus*, proposes Demiurge – World Soul – source of evil,[161] yet there is no indication of any opposition between the three. Bury proposes that here are enumerated "three grades of existence", each surrounded by plurality, thus: Good – mathematics – sense perception.[162] However, though there does seem to be graduation, the third cannot be sense perception because that is not incorporeal. Unfortunately, we have only these few lines to go on; the three are not called principles (ἀρχή), they are not called Ones (ἑν), and neither are they called gods (θεος).

The authenticity of Plato's Letters has been a matter of dispute for over two centuries, the first doubts probably being raised by Meiners in 1782.[163] It is known that Thrasyllus included the thirteen letters in his edition of Plato's work, but are unknown before that date. There is no record of any letters of Plato existing before the end of the third century BC.[164] We do know that many letters purporting to be from famous people were forged as exercises in rhetoric and that high prices were paid for the letters of illustrious men, providing an additional motive for forgery.[165] Numerous arguments have been raised against the authenticity of the second letter, which we will not trouble to rehearse exhaustively.[166] Perhaps the most substantial objection raised to date comes from Keyser. He proposes that τὸ σφαιρίον (312d; "sphere" [Morrow], "globe" [Bury]), the thing that Archedemus was to repair, is something mechanical, most likely an orrery.[167] He then demonstrates that such a device could not have existed at the time of Plato, as gears were

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[159] The Form of the Good is also called 'king' (Republic 509d).
[160] R. G. Bury, *Plato with an English Translation* (London: William Heinemann, 1961) 7:400.
[161] G. R. Morrow, *Plato's Epistles* (New York: Bobbs-Merall, 1962), 113.
[162] Bury, *Plato,* 7:401.
[163] C. Meiners, 'Iudicium de Quibusdam Socraticorum Reliquiis', *CSRSGHPC* 5 (1782) 45-58.
[164] J. M. Cooper, *Plato: Complete Work* (Cambridge: Hackett, 1997) 1634.
[165] Bury, *Plato,* 7:391.
[166] See J. Haward, "The Date of the Second Platonic Epistle", *CR* 40:6 (1926) 186-88; L. A. Post, "The Date of the Second Platonic Epistle", *CR* 41:2 (1927) 58-9; G. R. Morrow, 'Studies in the Platonic Epistles', *UIB* 32 (1935) 109; Bury, *Plato,* 7.399. These arguments are also discussed at length in R. S. Bluck, "The Second Platonic Epistle", *Phronesis* 5.2 (1960), 140-151.
[167] Cf. Bury, *Plato,* 7:410n1

yet to be invented[168] and thereby concludes that τὸ σφαιρίον is an anachronism of a later pseudographer. This argument rests on the uncertain interpretation of τὸ σφαιρίον, but in the absence of convincing alternatives the argument would seem conclusive.

If this letter is inauthentic then it seems likely, given its content, that it was forged to promote a certain reading of Plato.[169] The most appealing candidate is a Neopythagorean interpretation of *Parmenides.* Though Moderatus himself is too late to have influenced the second letter, it is possible that there was some Neopythagorean tradition prior to Moderatus, featuring a hierarchial triad of principles, as Rist speculates.[170] The fact that these principles are not described as "Ones" need not detract from the parallels, as this may be an innovation of Moderatus. Yet Moderatus's triad proves to be a useful hermeneutic for the second letter, as he provides us with three levels of existence, i.e. that above Being (= the first one); the intelligible (= the Forms), and the psychical. If Tarrant's ascription of the fragment of a commentary on the *Parmenides* to Thrasllyus is correct, then we would have evidence of an early triadic hierarchy within the intelligible realm. Since Thrasllyus had the opportunity to insert the letter into the Platonic corpus, if he also had a predisposition towards a triadic reading of Plato then he must be a prime suspect for the forgery.[171] Such a conclusion should lead us to identify the King (= the Good) with the One, the second with the Intellect, and the third with objects of reason.

iv. Moderatus of Gades (c.50-100 AD)[172]

We know almost nothing about the life of Moderatus and have scant trace of his writings, and yet he is arguably one of the formative influences upon Neoplatonism.[173] Merlan finds in Moderatus a new form of "aggressive" Pythagoreanism, whereby Plato and Aristotle are accused of plagiarizing all their important doctrines from the Pythagoreans.[174] In this way, Moderatus can claim the Platonic doctrines for Pythagoras. The most important fragment of Moderatus comes to us third hand through Porphyry, through Simplicius (*In Phys* 230.34-231.27): as such, we have no definite means of establishing which words belong to Moderatus and which to Porphyry's interpretation of him.[175] The scheme seems based upon the hierarchy of four natures: that above Being;

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[168]P. T. Keyser, "Orreries, the Date of [Plato] *Letter* ii, and Eudoros of Alexandria", *AGP* 80:3 (1998) 241-267.

[169] Keyser dates the second letter to the first century BC, which would correspond with the period of debate in Academy between Philo of Larissa and Antiochus of Askalon regarding the true teaching of Plato. Keyser proposes that the second letter was written to influence this debate (Keyser, "Orreries", 261, 265). Also Keyser proposes that Eudorus was the influence upon the author, though he admits that for Eudorus the Good was not the first, but the second, principle (Keyser, "Orreries", 264). We have seen that Eudorus does not posit a hierarchy of three principles but a Supreme One over a pair of opposites.

[170]J. M. Rist, "Neopythagoreanism and 'Plato's' Second Letter", *Phronesis* 10:1 (1965) 78-81.

[171] Cf. Tarrant, *Thrasyllan Platonism,* 172. Rist writes "it is unkind to suggest that Thrasyllus forged it himself, but its origin among Thrasyllus' spiritual forebears seems most likely" (Rist, "'Plato's' Second Letter",81).

[172]Moderatus is usually dated to the second half of the first century (Riedwig, *Pythagoras,* 125). He is associated with Gades (modern Cádiz, Spain), but "in a period of considerable elite mobility he could easily have received his education at the other end of the Mediterranean" (M. Trapp, "Neopythagoreanism", in *Greek and Roman Philosophy* (eds. R. W. Sharples & R. Sorabji; London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2007) 2:356).

[173] See particularly E. R. Dodds, "The Parmenides of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic 'One'", *CQ* 22:3/4 (1928) 129-142.

[174] Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", 90-1; cf. Porphyry, *Vita Pyth.* 53.

[175] As an added complication, Zeller had proposed that here Simplicius means to relate the opinions of Plato rather than those of Moderatus. Dodds was instrumental in redeeming this passage for Moderatus, based upon his reasoning that the three Ones of Moderatus had their origins for a particular exegesis of

the intelligible; the soul; the sensible (and perhaps a fifth, matter). The first three natures are described as Ones. The last nature is the sensible realm, which is derived from "it" (from the supreme One?). It does not participate with the Ones, but receives order as a reflection of them.

First One

The first One is simply described as "above being and any entity". In his work on the qualities of numbers, Moderatus associates the number one with this supreme One and first cause. It is the principle of unity and stability in the universe (Porphyry, *Vita Pyth.* 49).[176] The positing of a cause above Being is preempted by other Pythagoreans (see above).

Second One

The second One is Being, (τὸ ὄντως ὂν) and an intelligible (or that belonging to intelligence). This second One, though singular, is identified with the Forms. Therefore it is probably better thought of as the totality of the Forms and the intelligible realm. If the second One is an intelligible, then the first One may be an intellect, though this is nowhere stated.[177]

Continuing in the passage of Simplicius, Porphyry, citing Moderatus, describes how ὁ ἑνιαῖς λόγος (Unitary Logos?) contains in itself all the Forms and ratios (λόγων) of being, the paradigms of material bodies. It is not obvious whether the Logos is intended to be identified with the first or second One. Dillon prefers the latter (not least because this can be reconciled with other Middle Platonic schemes).[178]

Moderatus says Quantity comes into existence through the self-privation of the Unitary Logos. It is this Quantity that receives shape and form. Dillon interprets Quantity as "intelligible Matter", of which sensible matter is a shadow, and thus Dillon equates Quantity with the Indefinite Dyad at the level of Nous.[179] This analysis has many difficulties and is hampered by Dillon's desire to reconcile Moderatus's scheme with that of Eudorus and Numenius. Matter is described as "a shadow cast by the primary non-being existing in Quantity". This non-being, positioned above the sensible realm, might be something like Dillon's intelligible matter. However, Moderatus denies that Quantity is a Form and never describes it as an intelligible. Rather, Quantity is described as "dispersion" and "severance", words he also applies to Matter. Matter is, effectively, Quantity that has been limited and shaped by the Forms. The "primary non-being" is not Quanity; arguably it might be identified as the first One (who is above Being) if its "shadow" corresponds to the reflection which orders the sensible realm. Inasmuch as the Monad is identified with the First Cause (Porphyry, *Vita Pyth.* 49) then Moderatus's pair of opposites, if he holds such a doctrine, is the supreme One and Quantity (= Dyad), which is created by self-privation on the One. This would imply that the first One should be identified as the Unitary Logos.

Plato's *Parmenides* (Dodds, "Neoplatonic 'One'", 137). In any case, it seems impossible to attribute this doctrine to Plato, who does not talk about three Ones, nor identify the Forms as the second One (138).

[176] Merlan sees here the influence of Stoicism (Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", 95) though it may be already combined in Moderatus' Platonic sources.

[177] Cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 348.

[178] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 348.

[179] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 349.

Third One

The third One is psychical (or that belonging to soul). It is described as "participating" (μετέχειν) with the One and the Forms. The role of the third One is not explained; we may assume that Moderatus had a World Soul in mind.

Nothing extant from Eudorus provides motivation for a third One. Instead, the origins of the scheme seem to be the Pythagorean conception of the One, as expressed in *Pythagorean Notebooks* (monad as first cause) combined with an interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides* that may have been original to Moderatus[180] or derived from Thrasyllus. Plotinus associated the human soul with discursive thought and Proclus asserts that Numenius's third god (= world soul?) corresponded to discursive thought, which may explain the transition from Thrasyllus' *dianoeta* to Moderatus's psychical One.

v. Nicomachus of Gerasa (c.100 – 150)[181]

Little is known of the life of Nicomachus and some of his works are lost. His *Introduction to Arithmetic* and *Manual of Harmonics* are extant; his most important work for our present investigation, his *Theology of Arithmetic,* survives in quotations in a later compilation of the same name, often (though erroneously) ascribed to Iamblichus.[182] A summary of *Theology of Arithmetic* by Photius also provides some useful insight into what this work may have contained. Nicomachus, following in the footsteps of his Pythagorean forebears, puts considerable emphasis on arithmetic and arithmology, as witnessed by his works. Like many before him, arithmetic had religious connotations; the first decad (the numbers one to ten) manifesting the principles of the universe (cf. Theon).[183] Nicomachus associates numbers with the gods; the monad is identified with Zeus and Apollo; dyad with Justice and Isis (cf. Plutarch); triad with Leto and Athena; tetrad with Dionysus, and so on. He does not mean that gods are numbers, but associates them as "symbolic equivalents".[184]

God

Nicomachus says that God "coincides" with the Monad (*Th. Ar.* 3), and that the Monad "resembles" Providence (*Th. Ar.* 2). This mode of speech implies that Nicomachus did not equate God and Monad, but thought of the Monad as manifesting the qualities of God (and *vice versa*), particularly as the source of all that exists. The Monad "contains everything potentially" (*Th. Ar.* 1) and God "is seminally everything which exists" (*Th. Ar.* 3). This concept presumably rests on the proposition that arithmetic "exists before all other sciences in the mind of the Creator God like some universal and exemplary plan" (*Intr. Ar.* 1.4.2). For Nicomachus, numbers (i.e. the first decad) are the paradigm by

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[180] Cf. Rist, "Neoplatonic One", 399.

[181] Dillon dated his death to 196 based on the reference in *Theology of Arithmetic* to Proclus, the reincarnation of Nicomachus, coming 216 years after (J. M. Dillon, "A Date for the Death of Nicomachus of Gerasa?", *CR* 19:3 (1969) 274-5). However this date seems too late given Nicomachus' apparent relationship with Plotina, the wife of Trajan, and the translation by Apuleius made c.150-175 AD. For these reasons a floriut of c.100-150 is to be preferred (A. H. Criddle, "The Chronology of Nicomachus of Gerasa", *CQ* 48:1 (1998) 324-7). Though associated with Gerasa (modern Jerash, Jordan), there is a strong possibility that he taught at Alexandria (W. C. McDermott, "Plotina Augusta and Nicomachus of Gerasa", *Historia* 26:2 (1977) 192-203).

[182] R. Waterfield, *The Theology of Arithmetic* (Grand Rapids: Kairos, 1988) 23.

[183] Waterfield, *Theology of Arithmetic*, 25.

[184] Kahn, *Pythagoras,* 117; Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", 95. This device of linking numbers and the Olympian gods will be taken up by Iamblichus and Proclus in their efforts to maintain traditional Hellenic religion.

which "the Creative Mind wrought the construction and composition of the universe" (*Th. Ar.* 79; 83).

The dyad co-exists with the monad; the one cannot exist without the other "because double is double what is half, and half is half what is double" (*Th. Ar.* 14). Nicomachus also says the dyad is in a sense a monad, inasmuch as it is like "a source" (*Th. Ar.* 17). Thus while it is true that the dyad is generated by the self-doubling of the monad, this does not mean that there was a time when there was no dyad. This is significant since the dyad is associated with Nature as "an extension from the seed principle". Presumably we are meant to understand Nature coming into being from God yet without beginning, and being a source (a One?) in its own right. We can see hints of other thinkers here, but Nicomachus says no more.

A second god?

Thus far, we seem to have a relatively simple system of one God, who is a mind and a creator and who orders the universe according to a paradigm (= numbers). However, given the tendency in this period to split the demiurgic function, a number of scholars have asked whether Nicomachus posited another divinity, a god higher than the Demiurge or an intermediary between God and the world.[185] There seems to be few clues by which to answer the question. The issue is complicated by the fact that some of the most significant passages of *Theology of Arithmetic* are not clearly attributed; pages 4, 6 and, most importantly, 57-59 are introduced as "they say" or "the Pythagoreans say". Whilst it seems more probable that these words belong to Nicomachus than the compiler, who does not seem given to original composition, it is still unclear how closely these reflect the views of Nicomachus himself. We proceed with this caveat in mind.

"The Pythagoreans", we are told, associate the Monad with God, who is called "Intellect", "Artificer" and "Modeller" (*Th. Ar.* 4). They also associate the Monad with the Pythagorean One, who is called "Being" and "paradigm" (*Th. Ar.* 6). Later, we are told that according the Pythagoreans "the providence of the Creator-God wrought all things by basing on the first-born One the source and root of the creation of universe, which comes to be an impression and representation of the highest good" (*Th. Ar.* 57-8). In this passage there seem to be four distinct things: (1) the Creator-God, (2) the firstborn One, (3) the source of creation, and (4) the highest good. Dillon proposes that the first-born One be identified as the "impression" of the highest good (= the Good), and locates both the One and the Good within the Creator-God as aspects of him, but with a confessed "hesitation".[186] It seems more likely that it is the universe (or its "source") that becomes an "impression of the highest good". The "highest good" may be the Platonic Good, which Nicomachus may have identified with the Creator-God (cf. "the form of forms" *Th. Ar.* 2). The "firstborn One" might be identified with the Pythagorean One (= paradigm). We might expect the "source" of the universe to be God himself (cf. *Th. Ar.* 3). All of these four are associated with the Monad and thus may be identified. If this is

[185]Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 355f; F. E. Robbins, *Nicomachus of Gerasa: Introduction to Arithmetic* (London: Macmillan) 108f. Bechtle feels confident to extrapolate Nicomachus' scheme into an all transcendent God, on the first level, a demiurgic God (= firstborn One = logos), on a secondary level, and an immanent logos/rational world-soul (= lower aspect of demiurgic God), on a third level (or the lower aspect of the second). I cannot find significant justification for this view in the writings of Nicomachus (G. Bechtle, *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's "Parmenides",* (Bern: Verlag P. Haupt, 1999)101-2).
[186] Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 357

true, then this passage would seem to be an exercise in circumlocution saying "God made all things based upon God and thus the universe became like God".

If, on the other hand, the "source" of the universe is the monad (cf. *Th. Ar.* 1), then it is not strictly speaking God himself but a thought of God. What then is the firstborn One upon which the monad is based? The phrase "firstborn One" is perplexing; taken literally it would imply the existence of a prior paternal One/God/principle, or, if used in the sense of pre-eminence, might imply the existence of a subordinate One/God/principle. Given the Alexandrian connection, there is a strong temptation to see here the two Ones of Eudorus.[187] Perhaps, then, the firstborn One is the supreme One, to whom the Creator-God looks to bring into conception the monad (= the One) and the dyad, from which come the numbers, which in turn are the paradigm the Creator-God uses for the creation of the universe. But we must be cautious of such extrapolation.

A positive indication of a God higher than the demiurge may be found in the concept that the paradigm was "set before" the Creator-God (*Th. Ar.* 79; 83). The other indication is the "emphasized qualifying adjectives" applied to the Creator-God,[188] though he is frequently enough called just "God".

A third?

Opsomer finds hints of a distinction between the Creator-God and his power (δύναμις).[189] In places there is also an apparent distinction between God and his providence, though this may be no more than periphrasis (*Th. Ar.* 2; 57.21). The hebdomad is described as God's "instrument" in creation and his "most authoritative limb" (*Th. Ar.* 8).[190] Nevertheless, there is no real independence given to any of these aspects of God; indeed the hebdomad is a thought of God. There is no mediating divinity here. The λόγος τεχνικός ("artistic plan"; Intr. Ar. 1.6.1) is the pattern used to make the world; there is no sense of an intermediate Logos, except insofar as God is that λόγος τεχνικός (*Th. Ar.* 4.6-7; cf. 79.2; cf. *spermatites logos,* Photius).

Dillon attempts to identify triad as a World-Soul,[191] but this seems forced and would be inconsistent with Neopythagorean precedents.[192] Nicomachus does refer to a World-Soul, endowed by virtue of the hexad, which establishes harmony between the discordant elements in the world (*Th. Ar.* 35).[193]

We may tentatively describe Nicomachus's scheme as a transcendent One, from which a Creator-God receives the paradigm for the world (= numbers). Nicomachus did posit a World Soul which gives harmony to the world, though how it relates to God is not specified. If Nicomachus considers these to be a triad, he does not say so. Yet, in agreement with Opsomer, we say "one surely would have wished him [Nicomachus], or our sources, to be more clear".[194]

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[187] W. Windelband, *History of Philosophy* (trans. J. H. Tufts; London: Macmillan, 1914) 237.
[188] Bechtle, *"Parmenides",* 101.
[189] Opsomer, "Demiurges", 79, citing *Th. Ar.* 1.9; 3.5; 5.10.
[190] See particularly S. Pessin, "Hebdomads: Boethius meets the Neopythagoreans", *JHP* 37:1 (1999), who describes the hebdomadic aspect as God disseminating the seeds, the blueprints of creation.
[191] Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 356 (citing *Th. Ar.* 19); cf. Bechtle, *"Parmenides",* 101 (citing Photius).
[192] Theon of Smyrna identified triad as plurality and all things (i.e. the universe).
[193] Cf. Robbins, *Nicomachus,* 109-110.
[194] Opsomer, "Demiurges", 79.

h. Numenius of Apamea (c.150)

Introduction

Despite the fragmentary record, Numenius is given some of the highest praise by modern scholars.[195] Scholars' primary interest in Numenius has been as a precursor to Plotinus, whose dependence on Numenius was acknowledged even in ancient times.[196] Having influenced Harpocration (f.180) and Atticus (f.176),[197] being mentioned by Clement (150-215) and being associated with Maximus of Tyre (f. 152 AD; Porph. *V. Plot.* 17.14) has led scholars to a *floruit* for Numenius c.150.[198] Numenius is associated with Apamea (in Syria); to the extent that Amelius felt compelled to go and live there for a time (Porph. *V. Ptol.* 3); [199] he is also described as "the Roman" by John Lydus (De mens IV.80)[200], and, Frede urges, is familiar with Roman ideas.[201] It would not be unusual for a philosopher of this period to travel to Rome and reside there for a time. Teaching and other such activity in Rome would explain the interest given him by the Plotinian circle.[202] Numenius is quoted by Clement, Origen and Eusebius,[203] and may well have been influential to their thought.[204] The possibility that the writings of Numenius

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[195] "The most colorful writer in the ancient Pythagorean tradition" (Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 118); "this most fascinating figure in second-century philosophy" (Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 361); "the only witty Platonist after Plato himself" (M. F. Burnyeat, "Platonism in the Bible: Numenius of Apamea on *Exodus* and Eternity" in *Metaphysics, Soul and Ethics in Ancient Thought: Themes from the Work of Richard Sorabji* (ed. R. Salles; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005) 144).

[196] Amelius feels compelled to write a book on the differences between the opinions of Plotinus and Numenius in an effort to absolve Plotinus of plagiarism (*V. Plot.* 17).

[197] Dillon draws attention to two literary images used in both Numenius' *On the Unfaithfulness of the Academy to Plato* and Atticus' own attack on the Aristotle (Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 361-2; cf. Des Places, *Atticus*, 19).

[198] M. Frede, "Numenius", *ANRW* 36.1 (1987) 1038-9. Frede also draws attention to the listing of views on the Demiurge in Proclus, how Numenius appears prior to Atticus in what appears to be a chronological sequence (Proclus, *In Timaeus* 1.303.27ff).

[199]Dillon, Middle Platonists, 361.

[200]This testimony is late and so its reliability is questionable. It assumed that this is the same Numenius given that the name is uncommon and the opinions ascribed to him by John Lydus are consistent with what is know of the philosopher of Apamea.

[201] Frede, "Numenius", 1038.

[202]E. R. Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius" in *Les Sources de Plotin* (ed. E. R. Dodds; Geneva: Foundation Hardt, 1960) 7; M. Edwards, "Numenius of Apamea" in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (ed. L. P. Gerson; CUP, 2010) 1:125

[203] Saffrey proposed that Eusebius took his quotations of Numenius from dossiers written by Clement or Origen (H. D. Saffrey, "Les extraits du Πεϱι ταγαθου de Numenius dans le livre XI de la Preparation Evangelique d'Eusebe de Cesaree", *Studia Patristica* 13 (1975) 46-51). Carriker proposed an alternative theory that Origen brought the works of Numenius to the library at Caesarea (H. Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 94).

[204] For influence on Origen see "second god" (*Contra Celsum* 5.39; cf. Edwards, *Origen against Plato*, 83n120; cf. M. J. Edwards, "Nicene Theology and the Second God" in *Studia Patristica* (vol. XL; eds. F. Young, M. Edwards & P. Paruic; Leuven: Peeters, 2006) 193). Also see J. Dillon, "Logos and Trinity: Patterns of Platonist Influence on Early Christianity", *RIPLS*25 (1989) 6-7. For influence on Eusebius see "second god" (Dem V.30.3), also: "second place" (Dem V.1.215), "second degree" (Dem I.7.9), "the second" (Dem.V.Intro.202b; *Theophany* 2.24), "second being" (Dem V.3.220), "secondary sense" (Dem V.6.232a), "second Lord" (Dem V.8), "another Lord" (Dem V.16), "second cause" (Dem VII.3; Prep XI.18). Also see D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Eusebius of Caesarea* (London: A. P. Mowbrat, 1960) 149; A. Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea against Paganism* (Leiden: Brill, 2000) 130n131; H. Strutwolf, *Die Trinitätstheologie und Christologie des Euseb von Caesarea* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999) 187-9. It might be argued that "second" need not imply subordination, only difference. For instance Cyril accepts the Neoplatonic enumeration but criticises the Neoplatonists for implying the inferiority of the second and the third rather than accepting their consubstantiality. See S. R. C. Lilla, "The Neoplatonic

influenced these later Christian writers increases the probability that some earlier Christian writer engaged with Numenius or his work, particularly someone with a Syrian and/or Roman connection.

Though reported to be a Pythagorean, his thought and works are Platonic.[205] Numenius believed that Plato followed Pythagoras, because Socrates also derived his teachings from Pythagoras (fr.24.57-9). He strongly endorses Plato: "he was not superior to the great Pythagoras, but perhaps not inferior either" (fr.24.19-20). Such an attitude should not be surprising given that Pythagoreans like Thrasyllus and Moderatus were keen interpreters of Plato. Nevertheless, though he probably considered himself a Pythagorean, Numenius saw the utilization of Plato's texts as both consistent and beneficial to an understanding of Pythagorean doctrine – perhaps, as the only reliable witness to this doctrine. Suffice it to say, "Numenius defies easy categorization".[206]

The Influence of Gnosticism

Previous claims that Numenius may have been a Jew[207] or was well-acquainted with the OT[208] now seem unlikely. Whilst he seems positive about quoting the teachings of the Ἰουδαῖοι (fr. 1a; cf. fr.1c), [209] and his most widely attested words are about Moses,[210] there is little that is specifically Jewish in his writings (as even Stern acknowledges).[211] The Jews are just one of the "esteemed nations" (fr.1a) he cites. [212]

Hypostases and the Christian Trinity" in *Studies in Plato and the Platonic Tradition: Essays Presented to John Whittaker* (ed. M. Joyal; Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997) 152.

[205]His works include *On the Good*, *On things unsaid in Plato* and *On the Divergence of the Academics from Plato*. He only cites other Pythagoreans for the purposes of disagreeing with them (fr.52.3ff; Burnyeat, "Exodus and Eternity", 147). On the other hand, Numenius does write *On Numbers*, which we may presume was based on Pythagorean numerology.

[206] T. Curnow, *The Philosophers of the Ancient World* (London: Duckworth, 2006) 198.

[207] C. Bigg, The Christian Platonists of Alexandria (Oxford, 1913) 300n1.

[208] See M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (2 vols.; Jerusalem 1980) 2:207. For the contrary view see M. J. Edwards, "Atticizing Moses? Numenius, the Fathers and the Jews", *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990), 64-75.

[209] Origen also mentions that Numenius relates a story about Jesus, though he seems to raise doubts about his allegorical interpretation of the story (fr.10a = *Contra Celsum* IV.51). The fact that Origen states that Numenius does not name Jesus raises doubts about how credible Origen's testimony is (cf. Edwards, "Atticizing Moses?", 64).

[210]Clement, *Stromateis* I.22.150.4; Eusebius, *PE* IX.6.9, XI.10.14; Theodoret; *Suda*. Stern writes, "the enthusiasm of Numenius for Moses … is unequalled in the whole range of Greek literature" (Stern, *Jews and Judaism*, 2:206). Edwards raises doubts about the veracity of this passage since Eusebius does not seem to be directly acquainted with it but feels compelled to name Clement with his citation (*PE* IX.6.9; Edwards, "Atticizing Moses?", 67). A second doubt is that Clement uses the form Μωσῆς,rather thanΜουσαῖοςwhich Numenius uses elsewhere (cf. fr.9). The real difficulty is establishing what Numenius might have meant had he used the phrase. It is hardly likely that he would have agreed with Clement that Moses was the source of Plato's doctrine; as have seen Numenius gives preeminence to Pythagoras and entertains the teachings of the Jews only so far as the agree with Plato (fr1a).

[211] Stern, *Jews and Judaism*, 2:207.

[212] Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", 99. Van Nuffelen proposes that Numenius considered the founders of various religious traditions to be philosophically informed, rather than considering these religious traditions to be authoritative (P. van Nuffelen, *Rethinking the Gods: Philosophical Readings of Religion in the Post-Hellenistic Period* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011)81). Van Nuffelen proposes that the apparent frequency of references to Jews in the Numenian fragments is distorted by the fact that they are quoted by Christians (80).

There have been attempts to find allusions to the Bible in the extant fragments.[213] The nature of these citations suggests he is only acquainted with them through heterodox sources; "the erudite Eusebius … [though] searching for every slight or oblique anticipation of the Gospel" quotes only the story of Jannes and Jambres (fr.9 = *PE* IX.8.1-2; cf. fr.10a).[214] The only undisputed allusion to the Bible (fr.30; Gen 1:2 LXX) is interpreted as a reference to pre-incarnate souls and owes more to confused readings of Homer than to the Bible.[215] These heterodox readings may suggest that Numenius was acquainted with Jewish scriptures through the Gnostics. Prior to the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library, scholars attempted to draws parallels with Valentinianism, but these are unconvincing.[216] The parallels with Sethian Gnosticism are more compelling; Edwards writes, "if we were to look for a single milieu in which magic was commended, the Mosaic books rewritten and the mysteries of the Gospel clothed in ciphers, it would not be among the Jews of the synagogue, but among the Gnostics".[217] Knowledge of Gnostic texts would not only explain citations to the Pentateuch (cf. fr.30; Gen 1:2), but also the heterodox interpretation placed upon them (cf. Ap.John II.13.17-21).[218]

Whether this acquaintance with Gnosticism influenced Numenius's thought is more difficult to judge. The Gnostic view of the material world would certainly have resonated with his own dualism. Fr.11 might be interpreted as saying that creation was "the result of error and schism in the second noetic principle",[219] and perhaps akin to the fall of Sophia. If we were to speculate about a Gnostic precedent for the three gods of Numenius, the most likely parallel would be the Ophite three-male triad. However, looking for such parallels seems redundant given the clear precedent in the Neopythagorean tradition for his triad.

First God

For Numenius the first and highest cause is the Good. He begins his account, *On the Good*, with an exploration into Being. He believes Plato inquired about Being and quotes *Timaeus* 27d-28a to this effect (fr.7.8-12). This passage in *Timaeus* continues that the Demiurge looks to Being as his model and thus makes everything beautiful (28b). It follows then that Being should also be the Good and the Demiurge something distinct. Furthermore, in Plato's *Republic*, the realization of the Good comes from the contemplation of the incorporeal, apart from the things of the sensible world. Similarly then for Numenius the pursuit of the Good is to be conducted by neglect of the sensibles in favour of mathematics and the contemplation of what Being is (fr.2). Plotinus will

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[213] See Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius", 15; Dillon,*Middle Platonists*, 368; J. Whittaker, "Numenius and Alcinous on the First Principle", *Phoenix* 32.2 (1978) 149ff; Edwards, "Atticizing Moses?", 66; Burnyeat, "Exodus and Eternity",150.

[214] Edwards, "Atticizing Moses?", 68-9. The names Jannes and Jambres do not occur in the Exodus account but only in later tradition cf. 2 Tim 3:8; *TB Menahot* 85a; *Targum Jerusalem Ex.* 7:11-8:19, *Num* 22:22*;* also mentioned by Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* XXX.2) and Apuleius. Cf. Stern, *Jews and Judaism*, 2:213.

[215] K. S. Guthrie, *Numenius of Apamea: The Father of Neoplatonism* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1917)132.

[216]Zeller suggested that the term *demiurge* was taken from Valentinus, but this suggestion is redundant given Numenius' Platonism. Guthrie claims that the term αἰων(fr.5.9) is Gnostic in origin, but in Numenius it is used in the sense of eternity. Interest in demonology (G64) would not be unusual for a Platonist and does not require the influence of Gnosticism (Guthrie, *Numenius*, 149-151).

[217]Edwards, "Numenius", 1:117. Numenius also has clear parallels with the *Chaldean Oracles*, another text assigned to the 'Platonic underworld'

[218]Edwards, "Atticizing Moses?", 72

[219]Edwards, "Numenius", 1:123

argue that the Good is above Being (cf. *Rep* 509b), but Numenius does not.[220] It may be that Numenius reasoned, as Burnyeat suggests, that if the cause of goodness is the Good, then so the cause of being can also be;[221] on the other hand, it may be the Numenius was simply not willing to recognize that the existence of something above Being."Indeed, mindful of Plato (*Sophist* 248e) he is even unwilling to deny it a form of motion, speaking of the 'rest' (stasis) of the first god as 'an innate motion'".[222]

He reasons that if both Essence (οὐσία) and Form (ἰδέα) are objects of thought then there must be an Intellect to think them. This Intellect must be both prior to these objects of thought and the cause of them, and so can be none other than the Good (fr.16.2-4). Hence Being is both the Good and a mind. Being always is; without beginning or end, eternal and constant (fr.14). Though he does not call it "One" here (cf. "the Good is One" fr.19.13), his description of Being would well apply to the One of the *Parmenides.* This Being is the First God – he is ἁπλοῦς ("simple" [Gifford]; lit. "onefold").

The summary provided by Calcidius (*In Timaeum* c.295-299) gives us an account of Numenius's dualism. Numenius adopts the Pythagorean opposition between the *singularitatis* (presumably the One) and the *duitatis* (presumably the Dyad), which he identifies with God and Matter respectively. In contrast to other Pythagoreans, Numenius rejects the idea that the Dyad is produced by the doubling or the self-privation of the Monad (fr.52.1-24). Matter is uncreated and eternal (cf. fr.3). Whilst God is the source of good, Matter is the source of evil; the world is a mixture of goodness and badness being formed by both (fr.52.33-43). Matter is irrational and unordered, in a constant state of flux (cf. fr.3); it is formless, without quantity or limit (fr.52.9, 44-5). Matter must be ensouled, for whatever is motion is alive (fr.52.67-70); this is the evil world soul. The soul is a combination of a passible part, caused by matter, and a rational part, derived from "reason and God" (*ratione ac deo*; fr.52.71-74). It is implied that the evil world soul is also "an autonomous will"[223] such that evil is the result of willful malevolence, not just the inconstancy of matter. Matter is described as a mother (fr.52.78).

The First God is transcendent. Knowledge of the First God can barely be attained by man - it is a "godlike effort" (fr.2). The First God is concerned only with intelligibles, not sensibles (fr.15), and so it is "not seemly" that the First God should be the creator but rather he is "free from all kinds of work and reigns as king" (fr.12). However, Numenius' argument for a second God is not motivated simply by the idea that it is unsavoury for the First God to associate with matter but that Being is unchanging; it is Becoming that initiates the temporal creation of the world. He may also base these two gods on *Timaeus* 41a, which mentions both "father" and "maker" (cf. fr.21).[224]

Second God

All the agency of creation is ascribed to the Second God; "the Creative God governs, and travels through the heaven" (fr.12; cf. *Phaedrus* 246bff).[225] Nevertheless, the First God is the source of order in the world and of its eternal continuance (fr.15). Why? Because the

[220] Numenius seems to say as much himself (fr.2.16)
[221]Burnyeat, "Exodus and Eternity", 152
[222]J. Dillon, "Numenius", in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed. E. Craig; Routledge: 1998) 7:55.
[223]Edwards, "Numenius", 1:124
[224]Whittaker, "Plutarch, Platonism and Christianity", 53.
[225]The allusion to *Phaedrus* may be conscious attempt to identify the Second God with Zeus (cf. Harpocration).

Second God contemplates the First God and "takes his judgment from that contemplation" when binding matter together in harmony (fr.18). In this sense, the First God takes on the role of *Timaeus'* Paradigm (cf. fr.22; *Tim* 39e) - [226] it does not follow that the First God is the totality of the Forms. (The idea that the Second God is the "plurality of the Forms" also seems unlikely,[227] since Numenius seems to clearly distinguish the Second God from the Forms). Numenius argues that Form and Essence are objects of thought (νοητόν) and the Mind that is prior and the cause (of this νοητόν?) is the Good (fr.16.2-4), therefore one might argue that the Forms exist within the mind of the First God.[228] However, both the First and Second God are said to be "about" (περί*;* "engaged with" [Gifford]; "s'occupe" [des Places]) the intelligibles (νοητά; fr.15.4-5), so it is perhaps more likely that the Forms are conceived of existing distinct from either god. For Numenius, the Forms are not just paradigmatic thoughts; but as Plato conceived them, the true and absolute being that lies behind the imitation – so the First God is the Form of the Second (fr.20; cf. fr.16.7).

Numenius seems to discount the possibility that the Second God is fashioned from the Form of the Good as other things are fashioned by their Forms, explaining that the Second God imitates the first by imitation (fr.20). Eusebius interprets Numenius as speaking of the "Second Cause"[229] arising out of the First (*Pr.Ev.* XI.18.15), as one lamp lit from another (fr.14). However, taken in isolation these words of Numenius seem to be referring to knowledge as a divine gift rather than the procession of Gods. Frede proposes that the First God brings forth the Forms and then brings forth an adequate intellect to think them, though this explanation seems insufficient.[230] The key passage is fr.16, though its interpretation is disputed: "for the Second [God], being double, self-makes [αὐτοποιεῖ] both the form of himself and the world, being the Demiurge" (fr.16.10-12). Even if we make αὐτοποιεῖ equivalent with αὐτοουργει,[231] we are still left with the statement that the Second God makes the form of himself. Now presumably by "form of himself", Numenius does not mean the Good (cf. fr.20) but the Second God in his intelligible aspect, that is, apart from the world. This gives us the picture of the Second self-generating by self-contemplation. On the other hand, Numenius does refer to the First God as the "Father" of the Demiurge, (fr.12) and according to Proclus, refers to the Second God as the "child" (ἔγγονον*;* fr.21).

Third God

According to Proclus, Numenius teaches three gods (fr.21), and since Numenius ascribes the same doctrine to Socrates (and by implication Pythagoras; fr.24.52-60) and as he also enumerates the three ("third" fr.11.14; cf. fr.22), there seems good reason to accept this statement.[232] However, Proclus also attests that Numenius calls the third god "Made"

[226]Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 124-5.
[227]S. Gersh, *Middle Platonism & Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition* (UNDP, 1986)2:454; Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 386.
[228]J. P. Kenney, "The Platonism of the *Tripartite Tractate* (NH I.5)" in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism* (eds. R. T. Wallis & J. Bregman; SUNY Press, 1992) 201.
[229]Eusebius refers consistently to Numenius' Second God as "Second Cause", partly following the language of Plotinus (cf. *Pr.ev.*XI.17).
[230]Frede, "Numenius", 1069.
[231]E. Des Places, *Numenius: Fragments* (Paris: Belle Lettres, 1973) 111.
[232]Frede explains the absence of the third god from extant fragments, arguing that Numenius was writing a study of the Good and so the third god was not relevant (Frede, "Numenius", 1057). He also proposes that Eusebius may have avoided talk of the third god because this was where parallels between Christian and Platonic doctrine was the weakest (1056).

(ποίημα) and identifies it with the world (fr.21). Modern scholars deem Proclus to be mistaken on this point,[233] though Proclus has the advantage of a far greater acquaintance with the text of Numenius. However, even within the testimony of Proclus the situation is not simple, since he asserts that "the Third [God] corresponds to discursive thought (διανοούμενον)" (fr.22.4-5). Dodds argues that διανοούμενον is not passive but in the middle voice, which would mean that the Third God is a mind in its own right.[234] Numenius writes that the Second and the Third Gods, though divided, were originally one (fr.11;[235] cf. "twofold" fr.16), so the Third God would seem to be the lower aspect of the Second, rather than the world. Proclus' testimony is probably explained by Numenius' account of the origin of the world. According to Calcidius, the world is (made) out of God and Matter (fr.52.74-5), which is related to production of the soul from the material and divine souls. Numenius describes how the Second God is twofold; he is given to self-contemplation and is thus self-made (fr.16) and also gives contemplation or regard to Matter (fr.11) – this second activity is Demiurgic (fr.16). The Second God is divided by his association with Matter and it appears to be his lower aspect (the Third God) that "lays hold of the sensible and busies himself with it" (fr.11.19). The Third God would thus seem to be the rational soul that is combined with the material soul to form the World Soul, and thus may be reasonably identified as the world.[236]

We do not have much testimony regarding Numenius' doctrine of the World-Soul, though some interesting aspects might be hinted at in his understanding of the human soul. For Numenius, matter is changeable and divisible; it is necessary that something immaterial and unchangeable should be present within bodies to hold them together. The soul cannot be material, as the Stoics suppose, otherwise it would be changeable and thus unable to hold bodies together (fr.4b). One function, therefore, of the World-Soul is to hold together the world. Proclus counts Numenius among those who understood the soul mathematically (cf. fr.40), being made out of a monad and an indefinite dyad. The soul is thus indivisible and divisible (fr.39). This is probably best understood through Numenius' doctrine of the two souls – the rational (monad) and the irrational (dyad) (cf. fr.44). As the World-Soul is made of both divine and material souls, presumably it may also be understood mathematically as consisting of a monad and an indefinite dyad. This may indicate that Numenius thought of the third god (the rational world-soul) as a One (cf. Moderatus), although this is not explicit in anything extant.

Iamblichus attests that Numenius teaches the union of, and lack of distinction between the soul and its principle (ἀρχή; fr.42). This principle may be the First God, whom Numenius describes as the husbandman sowing the seed of the soul, and may lend weight to Gifford's rendering, which identifies the seed with the First God (fr.13). It is not clear how to understand the concept of the soul being indistinct from the First God, if indeed this is what Numenius taught. Presumably we are not to understand individual souls as nodes of some divine hive-mind, since the First God is transcendent and does not consider the sensibles (as human souls do). More probably, Numenius identified the First God as the *seed(s)* of the soul, which are planted and nurtured by the Demiurge.

[233]Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 367;
[234]Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius", 14.
[235]Frede proposes an alternative translation to the effect that "both the Second and Third are God and God is One" (Frede, "Numenius", 1057).
[236]Dillon, "Numenius", 7:55; Edwards, "Numenius", 1:124; Frede, "Numenius", 1069;

According to Porphyry,[237] Numenius said that the souls sit upon water that has been "divinely inspired" (Guthrie) or "animated by a breath of God" (*qu'anime un soufflé divin*; Des Places). In this context, Porphyry is talking about the generation of the soul. Apparently, Numenius understood Gen 1:2 ("the Spirit of God hovered over the water") as referring to the generation of souls (fr.30), or the descent of the soul.

Triads

Dillon writes that Numenius' "triadic scheme becomes rather forced in the matter of the third God". The third god seems to be the lower aspect of the second and yet Numenius seems keen to enumerate them separately. For this reason Dillon concludes that he is probably "following some model".[238] There are several possibilities for this model. Numenius ascribes a doctrine of three gods to both Socrates and Plato, perhaps indicating the influence of the *Second Letter,* though he does not quote it directly in any known fragment. Eusebius, giving an account of Plato's doctrines, gives a quotation from Plotinus where he cites the *Second Letter,* after which Eusebius adds: "and Numenius highly commending Plato's doctrines in …", which would seem to indicate some connection between Numenius and the *Second Letter.*[239] Edwards notes *Timaeus* 39e as another possible source for three divinities (cf. fr.22).[240]

However, Kahn argues that "the reference to three gods clearly implies that the doctrine was recognizably Pythagorean",[241] which implies that Numenius knew this doctrine from other sources than just the *Second Letter*. We may reasonably assume that these sources are Thrasyllus and Moderatus, and perhaps some others unknown to us. We have seen how Numenius implies that the First and Third gods are Ones. Numenius was convinced of the Pythagorean (and thus Platonic) credentials of the doctrine of three gods, such that it "conditioned" his interpretation of the *Timaeus.*[242]

We should also consider the possible influence of the 'Platonic underworld'. We have already seen the likelihood that Numenius is acquainted with some Gnostic texts. These may have influenced Numenius's three gods, although it is questionable whether he would feel constrained to follow these sources. A scheme like the Ophite's three males above primeval and chaotic matter would have encouraged the scheme Numenius produces. Similarly, the *Chaldean Oracles,* if they could be shown to pre-date Numenius, might have provided sufficient motivation for Numenius' triad (see below). It suffices to say that whatever additional influence these sources may have added, Numenius' primary compulsion for three gods must be his belief in its Platonic and Pythagorean credentials.

[237]Porphyry takes Numenius to be representative of the views of Pythagoreans concerning the soul.
[238]Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 367
[239]Merlan, "Greek Philosophy", 98.
[240]Edwards, "Numenius", 1:124
[241]Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 121n57.
[242]Kahn, *Pythagoras*, 123.

i. Chaldaean Oracles[243]

Introduction

Dodds called the *Chaldaen Oracles* "the last important Sacred Book of pagan antiquity".[244] They are representative of what Dillon calls the "Platonic underworld". They are a mixture of philosophy and mythology; in this sense they are "characteristic of the final stages of paganism"[245] and parallel other forms of literature of this period, including Gnostic texts. The *Oracles* are an interesting example of the fringe of Platonism and the overlap between academic philosophy and popular religion. The metaphysical scheme of the *Oracles* has a clear Platonic basis, but the expression of that scheme is couched in mystery and mystification. It is interesting then that the *Oracles* should have such great authority in the opinions of Neoplatonists, like Porphyry, Proclus and Damascius, who seem to regard the *Oracles* as genuine revelation: "religion is true philosophy".[246] For this reason the *Oracles* are often quoted alongside Plato to substantiate a particular doctrine. Christian Platonists did not have the same regard for the *Oracles;* Psellus does refer to them but only in order to expose the errors of pagan theology.

In terms of influences upon the author of the *Oracles,* parallels are often drawn between both Gnosticism and Hermeticism. The *Oracles* share with these an elaborate metaphysical scheme, a degradation of matter, a dualism; a concept of salvation through enlightenment, and certainly a fondness of mythologizing.[247] This being said, one would have difficulty identifying any particular form of Gnosticism to which the *Oracles* relate more closely than any other, and so these general parallels may be better explained as independent development from a shared Platonic (and oriental) basis.[248] Rasimus has noted possible allusions to the *Oracles* in Sethian texts.[249]

We have better success attempting to identify the specific stream of Platonism to which the *Oracles* belong: most scholars have identified parallels with the thought of Numenius.[250] There may be some connection between the *Chaldean Oracles* and the

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[243] It is recorded that the *Oracles* were received from the gods by Julian "the Chaldaean" and written down by his son Julian "the Theurgist" (late second century). Since the *Oracles* were known by the third century and seem to reflect the thought patterns of the second century, generally scholars have accepted the attribution (G. Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy: The Schools of the Imperial Age,* (trans. J. R. Catan; SUNY Press, 1990) 285).

[244]E. R. Dodds, "New Light on the 'Chaldaean Oracles'", *Harvard Theological Review* 54:4 (1961) 263.

[245] Reale, *Ancient Philosophy*, 285. Majercik rightly characterises the *Oracles* as "movement away from the school traditions of Platonism towards an unabashed religiosity" (R. Majerick, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden:Brill, 1989) 4).

[246]P. Merlan, "Religion and Philosophy from Plato's *Phaedo* to the Chaldaean Oracles", *JHP* 1:2 (1963) 175.

[247]Majercik, *Chaldean Oracles*, 4; cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 393

[248] H. Lewy, *Chalean Oracles and Theurgy* (Le Caire: Imrimerie de l'Institut d'Archeologie Orientale, 1956) 390ff.

[249]T. Rasimus, "Porphyry and the Gnostics: Reassessing Pierre Hadot's Thesis in Light of the Second- and Third-Century Sethian Treatises", in *Plato's Parmenides and its Heritage: Reception in Patristic, Gnostic, and Christian Neoplatonic Texts* (eds. J. Turner & K. Corrigan; Atlanta: SBL, 2010) 100.

[250] Dodds, "Chaldaean Oracles", 270-1; P. Athanassiadi, "The Chaldaean Oracles: theology and theurgy", in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (eds. P. Athanassiadi and. M. Frede; Oxford, 1999)155; Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 393;

temple of Bel at Apamea,[251] which would increase the likelihood that Numenius and the author were contemporaries.[252] The parallels between Numenius and the *Chaldean Oracles* are quite close. In both systems the chief deity is called "Father" and "First Intellect", and is associated with the monad. In both, this deity is above works and may only be known by the human mind through a process of neglecting the material world. Under this chief deity both systems posit a second deity, also an Intellect, who is identified as a creator (δημιουργέ/τεχνίτης). This Intellect is double, directed to both intelligible and the sensible world. The mapping between Numenius' Third God and the *Oracles'* Hecate is, perhaps, less exact. They are both psychical, but Hecate is clearly depicted as being a female. Hecate is described as the Giver of Life, perhaps paralleling the sowing of the soul in Numenius. Dodds has argued for the primacy of the *Oracles* based upon those fragments where Numenius appears to adopt the style of addressing mankind (fr. 17);[253] however such addresses have precedent in philosophical dialogues (*Cratylus* 408b). Dillon proposes that both *Oracles* and Numenius were dependent on the "underworld" of Platonism.[254]For myself, I feel the parallels are too specific to be independent, and I think it preferable to date Numenius slightly earlier and give him the primacy. If Numenius is considered to be formative on the scheme of the *Oracles* then it may be that the *Oracles* provide us with some clue as to the nature and function on Numenius' Third God, in the absence of more concrete testimony.

Reconstructing the theology and metaphysics of the *Oracles* is fraught with difficulty. Firstly the text is fragmentary; secondly those who quote the *Oracles* do so to substantiate their own views. One either reads the fragments without context or with the accompanying interpretation, which is mostly eisegesis.[255] These problems are compounded by the fact that the language of the *Oracles* is, in the words of Dodds, so "flowery" and "imprecise" that it is hard to be sure of anything.[256] Lastly, any effort to reconstruct the underlying scheme of the *Oracles* must make the assumption that there was one – quite a leap of faith considering the bizarre nature of the material.

First God

Let us begin by trying to correlate some concepts. We find within the *Oracles* Pythagorean numerology, with monad (fr.11), dyad (fr.8) and triad (fr.28) mentioned. We also find two intellects (fr.7). Additionally, the key figure throughout the *Oracles* is the "Father". Since the phrases "Paternal Intellect" (fr.39) and "Paternal Monad" (fr.11) are used, we may reasonably correlate the Father with the monad and the First Intellect. Yet already we run into difficulties as the *Oracles* often uses phrases such as "Intellect of the Father" (e.g. fr.134). This would seem to imply that Intellect is in some way independent of the Father. Lewy separates the Father from the First Intellect, seemingly interpreting the *Oracles* along Neoplatonic lines with a Supreme God above Nous.[257] Such an interpretation is problematic, not least because there is no evidence within the *Oracles* of a god that is not also a νοῦς. Lewy seems to be guilty of seeing different hypostases or emanations where merely a change of expression is used. Presumably the

[251]Athanassiadi, "Chaldaean Oracles", 155.
[252] Dodds, "Chaldaean Oracles", 271.
[253]Dodds, "Numenius and Ammonius", 11.
[254]Dillon, Middle Platonists, 364.
[255] See particularly R. Majercik, "Chaldean Triads in Neoplatonic Exegesis: Some Reconsideratons", *CQ* 51:1 (2001).
[256] Dodds, "Chaldaean Oracles", 268.
[257]Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles*, 13.

Father is also to be identified with "the One" (fr.9), "God" (fr.119) and the "Once Transcendent" (fr.169). The Father is described as being "without parts", which Proclus interprets as meaning "simple and indivisible" (fr.152), which would cohere with the idea of the Father being a One.

Is there a One above the Father? Proclus thought so, interpreting "the Father snatched himself away" (fr.3) as an acknowledgment that the Father was not absolutely transcendent, but had need to snatch himself away (i.e. to become more transcendent).[258] However, Proclus is bringing a later negative theology to his interpretation. The only indication of something above the Father is the phrase "self-perfected Source of the Father" (fr.37), which would seem to imply that the source is above the Father. Yet this seems to be an idiosyncrasy of the *Oracles'* grammar in that "Source of the Father" may be the same as "the Paternal Source"; similarly, "the Intellect of the Father" (cf. fr.134) is the same as "the Paternal Intellect".

The *Oracles* view of matter is difficult. Majercik asserts that the *Oracles* have a "more positive, monistic view of creation", which she parallels with the monism in Sethian Gnosticism.[259] This would contrast with the dualism of Numenius. Majercik bases her conclusion largely on the expression "father-generated matter" (ἡ ὕλη πατρογενής), though this is not a direct quote from the *Oracles* themselves but from Psellus (*Hypotyp.* 27).[260] It is interesting to note that the term πατρογενής is elsewhere applied to Hecate (fr.35). In another fragment, which Majercik considers doubtful,[261] matter is described as "primordial" (fr.173), though nowhere is matter described as eternal. Even fr.34 is uncertain since it is not clear whether this refers to the generation of matter *per se* or the variegation of matter. According to Psellus, matter is void of qualities until it is "divided into four elements out of which the world was fashioned" (*Hypotyp.* 27; cf. fr.67). On the worth of matter, the extant fragments are more explicit; matter is "evil" (fr.88), "squalid" (fr.100), "bitter" (fr.129) and turbulent (fr.180). The *Oracles* urge men to flee from "the light-hating world" (fr.134). The *Oracles* certainly maintain the moral consequents of dualism, even if they do not teach matter to be eternal.

The identity of the Dyad is not immediately clear. Were the *Oracles* true to its Pythagorean heritage, it would identify the Dyad with Matter, which would justify its possible monism, as the dyad is generated from the monad (fr.12). However, Majercik equates the dyad with the Second Intellect, based upon the testimony of Proclus who connects the phrase "besides this one (i.e. Father) sits a dyad" with the double function of the Second Intellect (fr.8).[262] This might make sense of the concept of the intelligible being the "source of every division" (fr.179). Our only other clue is from Damascius (fr.24), who is not particularly enlightening.

The Second Intellect

As in Numenius, it is difficult for men to come to knowledge of the Father. You must turn away from the "multiform other" (fr.9a) and "extend an empty mind" (fr.1). The

[258] Proclus, *Exc. Chald.* 4; cf. Majercik, "Chaldean Triads", 269.
[259] Majercik, *Chaldean Oracles*, 18.
[260] Majercik, *Chaldean Oracles*, 156.
[261] Majercik writers that in this fragment primordial matter is identified with Aphrodite, a figure that does not occur in any other known fragment. She notes that Proclus does identify Aphrodite with Hecate (= World Soul) but makes no mention of matter (Majercik, *Chaldean Oracles*, 206-7).
[262] Majercik, *Chaldean Oracles*, 6; cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 394

reason for this difficulty in conceiving of the Father is the familiar Platonic division of the intelligible and material worlds. The Father does not act directly upon matter ("by means of works") but using an intermediary, namely the "Craftsman" (τεχνίτης; fr.5). It is important to note that the Father, whilst transcendent, is still ultimately the source of all things (fr.10). This is because the Father is the source of the Craftsman ("Intellect derived from Intellect"; fr.5) and because he is the intelligible world (fr.21). The second concept may need unpacking, but follows directly from Middle Platonic trends. In the *Oracles* the Forms are described as being 'thought' by the Paternal Intellect (fr.37; cf.fr.38). For the Father, thinking is an act of creation of the intelligible world; he "thought his works" (fr.39). The writer of the *Oracles* takes this idea one step further, asserting that the Father and the intelligible world are interdependent; "the Intellect does not exist without the intelligible and the intelligible does not exist apart from the Intellect" (fr.20). In this sense, the Father is the intelligible world and the paradigm for the material world.

Unlike the First Intellect, which is described as being "self-generated" (fr.39; cf.37), the Second Intellect is derived from the First. This Second Intellect is often identified with a Demiurge by the Neoplatonists but is not called so in direct quotation from the *Oracles;* instead the term τεχνίτης, and its cognates is found (fr.5, 33). According to the *Oracles*, the "entire human race" calls the Craftsman "the First Intellect" (fr.7), i.e. it believes the Craftsman to be the highest Intellect (cf. Numenius, fr.17). The First Intellect presents the Forms to the Second Intellect, who then proceeds to create the world (fr.7, 37). As in Numenius, the Second Intellect serves a dual function, both contemplating the Forms and ordering matter to form the world (fr.8).

Is there a Logos-doctrine within the *Oracles?* There are hints but insufficient evidence. Fr.5 refers to a "fiery logos" that orders the cosmos (= Second Intellect?). Another line refers to the "First Power of the sacred word [ἱεροῦ λόγου]" (fr.175). Proclus identified this Logos as the Intellect before being actualised.

The World Soul

Though this may not be representative, in the fragments extant we find considerable attention given to a female principle, called "Hecate", who is related to the ordinal triad (cf. Nicomachus). Hecate is "generated from the Father" (fr.35), though Hermias understood her to be self-moved based upon the couplet "to others she provides life; to herself, far more" (fr.174; Hermias, *In Phaedrus* 110:3-6c). The *Oracles* describe how the "womb" of Hecate is, as it were, the mixing bowl of creation; in many ways like the Receptacle of the *Timaeus.* The womb "contains the All" (fr.30), because in that womb all things are sown (fr.28). The womb is also the source of life (cf. fr.56), which is presumably the implication of "in the triad the Father has mixed every breath" (fr.29). This would seem to indicate that Hecate is to be equated with the World Soul, who is described as "the Mistress of Life" (fr.96). This Soul declares that she is "situated animating the All with my heat" (fr.53).

Majercik links the World Soul with Power, one of the two faculties of the Father (cf.fr.4).[263] The reason for doing so is to reconcile the three gods we have identified (Father-Craftsman-Hecate) with the implied triad from fr.4 (Father-Power-Intellect).

[263] Majercik, *Chaldean Oracles*, 7

Such identification would make Power the medium between the Father and the Craftsman, a proposition that might make sense of fr.50 "the center of Hecate is borne in the midst of the Fathers"[264], though these "Fathers" are more probably the rulers of the three worlds. Other than the probable association of both Power and Hecate with the moon, there does not seem much to connect the two.

It is also of note that Hecate is "described in the Oracles as a 'diaphragm' or 'membrane' (fr.6), and appears to be the channel through which influences from above are shed upon the physical world".[265] This parallels the role of the Holy Spirit as the boundary of spiritual realm in Ophite and Basilidean mythology (see below).

Triads

The Neoplatonists made much of fr.4, "for Power is with him, but Intellect is from him". Porphyry systematized this into a triad, with the Father "snatched away" above the other two, which exist within the Father in his transcendent state without distinction. Proclus, on the other hand, systematized these three into an ennead of three triads (cf. Damascius).[266] Lewy seems to be influenced by these Neoplatonic schemes in his interpretation of the *Oracles,* creating from the fragments a system of three triads. The first of these triads is Intellect-Will-Power, which constitutes the Paternal Monad.[267] The difficulty with such a reconstruction, as Majerick points out, is that it is "nowhere attested in any undoubted fragment".[268] Reading fr.4 in isolation might imply a Father-Power-Intellect triad, but contrasted with other fragments we find several qualities associated with the Father, "none of which are triadically conceived".[269] The phrase "his intellectual Power" also seems to militate against the idea that these qualities should be conceived as hypostases; indeed, capitalizing the first letter of these terms may be quite unwarranted and misleading.

The *Oracles* are full of triads and threes, but it is not clear whether the author had some particular reason for this triadic persuasion. For instance, faith, truth and love are described by Proclus as a "praiseworthy triad" of virtues that lead to God (fr.46), yet though the *Oracles* say that "all things are governed and exist in these three" (fr.48), there does not seem to be anything essential or necessary in their enumeration since these virtues are elsewhere linked to a fourth, hope.[270] In the same way, the qualities of the soul – Intellect, Will and Love (fr.44) – are numbered, but there does not seem to be any particular significance to that. That there are three worlds in the *Oracles'* cosmology – Empyrean, Ethereal and Material (fr.203, cf. fr.22) – does necessarily lead to things being grouped in threes. For example, there are the "three turbulent rulers" (fr.73) – the teletarchs – corresponding to the three worlds. Each world and each teletarch is linked to a heavenly body: the Material with the moon, the Ethereal with the mundane sun and Empyrean with the transmundane sun (cf. three fates in Plutarch).[271] We have already seen that Hecate is associated with the moon and there are hints of a solar imagery in

[264] Cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 394.
[265]Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 394.
[266] Majercik, "Chaldean Triads", 266-276; cf. Majercik, *Chaldean Oracles,* 7ff.
[267] Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles,* 105ff. "These intermediaries are his faculties who in their virtuality are identical with the Supreme Being, but acquire in the state of actuality a particular existence" (79).
[268] Majercik, "Chaldean Triads", 277
[269]Majercik, "Chaldean Triads", 277.
[270]Majercik, "Chaldean Triads", 277.
[271] Majercik, *Chaldean Oracles,* 12

reference to the Father; however, whether it is legitimate to align Father-Craftsman-Hecate with the three worlds is uncertain. Nevertheless it is these three "gods" that seem to be at the core of the *Oracles'* scheme.[272] Yet, though the *Oracles* refer to a number of triads (e.g. fr.31, 32), it is not clear whether Father-Craftsman-Hecate were regarded triadically. The closest we come to such a statement are fragments like fr.2, where the soul's search for the First Intellect is described as the search for "the entire token of the triad"; and fr.26, where the Once Transcendent is described as "a triadic monad".

j. Summary

The development of divine triads within the Platonic tradition is connected to cosmological concerns: where did the world come from and how does God relate to it. Plato left his followers with a range of materials with which to answer these questions. In the *Republic* he distinguished the intelligible world from the sensible world, explaining that the former is made up of the Forms which derive from the chief Form, the Good. In the *Timaeus* he describes a temporal creation whereby a god, the Demiurge, shapes the world using a paradigm and a substrate called the Receptacle. In the *Parmenides* he explores the issue of Being, described as simple and without components. Whilst there are shared themes throughout these and other dialogues, it is not clear whether he intended them to be taken as a unified system. Nevertheless, the Platonists attempted to reconcile them. In addition to his extant dialogues, Plato also left behind his unwritten doctrines as recorded by Aristotle. Based upon the doctrines of the Pythagoreans, Plato adopted as first principles the One and the Indefinite Dyad, the former imposing limit and order on the latter.

Whilst Plato himself does not seem concerned with triads (unless the second letter were genuine), the Platonists developed a number of triadic schemes from this material. Platonism was commonly held to have three first principles: God, Forms and Matter (Atticus fr.26; Alcinous, *Didask.* 8.1; 9.1; 10.1; Apuleius, *De Platone* 1.5; Hippolytus, *Ref* 1.16; Aëtius 1.3.21 = Diels *Dox.* 287a17-288a6). It is questionable how many Platonists actually conceived of their own schemes in this way, but it is an understandable synopsis of Platonic ideas. The *Timaeus* could be interpreted as positing Demiurge, Paradigm and Receptable as first principles. Yet during the Middle Platonic period the Forms were generally not regarded as a first principle, but as something arising from God. If the Forms were intelligibles then they required an intellect to think them: so the Forms became the thoughts of God (cf. Alcinous), or in totality the mind of God (cf. Plutarch). Ultimately the One, as first cause of everything, became the object of contemplation which the Intellect used as Paradigm and from which he drew the intelligibles (cf. Plotinus). This reconciliation of Forms with God would result in a dualism between God and matter. Such a dualism was already active in Plato's unwritten doctrines, and it is this dualistic tradition that would have prevented many Platonists from positing the Forms as an independent principle.

[272] Lewy attempts to add a further emanation identifying Aion as "Father-begotten light" and "a noetic monad with a dual aspect" (*Chaldean Oracles,* 99). However, this conclusion depends largely on fragmentswhich Lewy supposed to be part of the *Oracles* but are generally not accepted by other scholars. The only *Oracles* fragment that refers to Aion is fr.12, and only in Damascius' commentary, not in quotation. The quotation itself, "the Monad is extensible which generates duality" more probably refers to the generation of the Dyad (cf. Majercik, *Chaldean Oracles,* 147).

Already, in the Pythagorean tradition we see motions towards monism. The *Pythagorean Notebooks* have the dyad arise out of the monad, a scheme shared by Moderatus and Theon. Ps-Archytas positioned a God above the two principles of Limiting and Unlimited and Eudorus positioned a Supreme One above monad and dyad. These attempts to posit a cause above the pair of opposites find precedent both in the writings of Plato (*Philebus* 26eff) and Aristotle (*Met.* XII 1075b18), in response to the need to explain the opposites by a shared cause. The consequence for Eudorus' scheme is that the Supreme One must transcend difference and transcend qualities. This view of God was to dominate both in Alexandria (cf. Ammonius, teacher of Plutarch) and in the Neopythagorean tradition. Eudorus posits a divine triad of the Supreme One over a pair of opposites. We find a similar triad in the writings of Philo, in which we can find a God who transcends qualities and below, the dyad (= matter), arguably with a second monad. We also find a second triad, which may be related to the first, of transcendent God above Logos (male) and Sophia (female). Furthermore, in Plutarch we find a transcendent God above an active female principle, but whilst Isis is identified as matter, she is not identified as dyad. There is no obvious second monad, unless it be Nous. Also God, through transcendent, is not qualityless.

The reason Plutarch deviates from the Alexandrian scheme represented by Eudorus is a desire to maintain a dualism between God (the One) and pre-cosmic disorder (the dyad). For Plutarch, the dyad is not matter but a substrate of disorder on which matter is imprinted. We see a similar distinction in Philo, who regards matter as quasi-existent substrate. This preserves the feminine principle from being the source of evil. Instead, we find the concept that motion is caused by a soul, necessitating the existence of an irrational world soul within pre-cosmic disorder. For Plutarch and for Atticus following him, it is the participation of the irrational world soul with the Nous that renders it rational, thus bringing order to the world. Whilst Plutarch explores some Platonic concepts through the Egyptian divine triad of Osiris-Isis-Horus, both he and Atticus testify to conception of another triad of God-Nous-World Soul. Neither Plutarch nor Atticus regarded the Nous as properly separate from God, but this pattern was widely accepted, as is attested by Alcinous and Apuleius. Both these sources describe a transcendent God and a world soul possessing an intellect. Whilst the intellect derives from God, it is not clear whether the world soul exists independently or is conferred by God. Alcinous seems to attest both views; Plutarch seemed to hint that the irrational world soul came from "above".

Alexandrian Platonism, as witnessed by Eudorus, Philo and Ammonius (the teacher of Plutarch), held God to be transcendent; above quality as both One and Being. Ammonius explicitly draws on Plato's distinction between Being and Becoming, identifying God as the former. Another motivation for God's transcendence came from Aristotle's concept of the Prime Mover (cf. Alcinous). Yet the concept of an aloof and motionless God seems inconsistent with the activity of the Demiurge. Alcinous does not seem to make an effort to resolve the tension between these two conceptions of God. Atticus does seem cognizant of the problem and responds by rejecting Aristotle's view of God as a denial of providence. Apuleius may attest to some attempts to deal with the problem by ascribing some demiurgic activities to the world soul and to daemons, though he still identifies God as the creator. Similarly, Maximus posited a host of created deities as intermediaries. For Philo it would have been untenable to deny that God was the creator, but he does identify the Logos as the instrument of creation.

Through the Neopythagoreans, Plato's *Parmenides* became another prompt for divine triads. Thrasyllus, if he is the interpreter of Rhodes, read the *Parmenides* as speaking of five natures, three of which were in the intelligible realm: the One, intellect and objects of reason. It was, perhaps, Thrasyllus himself who wrote Plato's second letter to promote such a scheme. Later we find Moderatus offering a similar reading, positing three ones; the first above Being, the second identified as Being and the totality of the Forms, and the third as soul. Whilst the first one brings forth the dyad (= quantity) by self-privation, the second one (= Forms) shapes the dyad to form matter. Thus the scheme of Moderatus is not too distant from Eudorus, except that he posits a third one. Nicomachus, as far as he can be reconstructed, offers a similar scheme with the Firstborn One, who brings forth the dyad by self-doubling. Below the Firstborn One is a second God, who is identified as the Creator; it is by contemplation of the Firstborn One that the Creator-God brings forth the monad and all creation. Nicomachus is unclear on the World Soul, though we have no reason to speculate that his World Soul was wildly different from his predecessors.

Numenius was clearly influenced by this scheme but deviates in several points, which arguably take him closer to the Platonism of Plutarch. He identifies his first god as Being rather than above Being. Matter (= dyad) does not arise from God but is eternal; it is moved by an irrational world soul that receives order from God and reason. The Forms are identified as the thoughts of God (rather than as the second god). Numenius is an innovative thinker; whilst he is motivated to posit three gods (he believes Plato taught this), he posits his own reasons for this scheme. Being is transcendent and unchanging; it cannot initiate creation. Rather it is the second God, as Becoming, that initiates creation. In some sense self-generated (perhaps as the Intellect of Plotinus), the second god has a dual-activity of self-contemplation and of creation. The latter activity divides the second god, creating the third god, who seems to be the world soul. Harpocration seems to witness to this same scheme, positing three gods; the second is the demiurge, the third is probably the world soul. Similarly, the *Chaldean Oracles* posits a transcendent Father, a demiurgic second intellect and a third, Hecate, who is identified as both receptacle and as world soul. However, in the *Oracles* Hecate is generated by the Father.

The term *logos* is a recurring theme of Middle Platonism but it is not consistently used as a designation for a second god/intellect/one. Philo's Logos was the totality of the Forms and the instrument of creation. Plutarch used the term for Nous, identified as the totality of the Forms but not really independent of God. Thrasyllus uses the term for the thought process of the cosmos-moving god, and thus for the vehicle of the forms. Nicomachus uses the term of the pattern of the world, which is identified as God. Numenius does not use the term *logos*, but it is testified that he thought the world soul was brought to order by reason (Latin: *ratione*). The *Oracles* hint that the *logos* orders the cosmos and may have been identified with potential intellect. Whilst the term *logos* does not pick out one particular emanation, it does seem consistently connected with the intelligibles and with the ordering of the world.

3. Gnostic Triads

a. Introduction

Gnosticism is a very significant phenomenon in the history of both Christianity and Platonism, impinging on both of them and influencing their development. It is also replete with triads. Therefore Gnosticism is a possible candidate for influencing the development of the Christian triad, and may also provide insight into the development of Platonic triads.

However, the study of Gnosticism is dogged by a number of methodological problems. These include defining Gnosticism, identifying the date and provenance of Gnostic texts or concepts, and explaining its origins. It is not within the scope of this thesis to resolve any of these problems, but it is necessary to present my working assumptions.

i. Defining Gnosticism

The term "Gnosticism" can be use in two ways. Firstly, it can be used broadly to refer to a number of only loosely connected ideas.[273] This usage can be problematic, as Williams writes: "[it]has come to mean too much, and therefore perhaps very little".[274] Secondly, it can be used to try to refer to a specific religious movement. However, even here we run into difficulties. Karen King has argued that there is no such thing as Gnosticism; it is "a rhetorical term [that] has been confused with a historical entity".[275] She argues that "Gnosticism has been constructed largely as the heretical other in relation to diverse and fluctuating understanding of orthodox Christianity".[276] Williams asserts that the "impression" of a historical entity called "Gnosticism" has been created by "the constant repetition in modern studies of clichés", and owes little to the evidence.[277] "It is modern scholars who speak of Gnosticism: the ancients spoke of Simonians, of Menadrians, of Saturnilians, of Basilideans, of Carpocrations, of Valentinians, of Marcionites, Ophites, and of Sethians, to name a few".[278]

Recent scholarship has attempted to refocus the study of Gnosticism on to a specific and identifiable community. Following Hans-Martin Schenke's thesis, many scholars now identify Sethian Gnosticism as "classic" Gnosticism, defined according to a set of defined criteria.[279] Nevertheless, it is questionable whether these criteria actually pick out a historical movement. The set of criteria is not uniform amongst those texts identified as Sethian, which calls into question the validity of the reconstruction.[280] Wisse has

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[273] "one man's Gnosticism may be simply another man's Mysticism, Esoterism, Doceticism or Encratism" (E. M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A survey of the proposed evidences* (London: Tyndale Press, 1973) 13).

[274] M. A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An argument for dismantling a dubious category* (Princeton University Press, 1996) 4.

[275] K. L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (London: Harvard University Press, 2005) 1.

[276] King, *What is Gnosticism*, 2.

[277] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism"*, 5.

[278] S. Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism* (trans. C. Harrison; London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1991) 1.

[279] (1) Adherents regard themselves as the "seed of Seth"; (2) Seth is regarded as a heavenly saviour; (3) the four lights are posited as heavenly dwelling places; (4) the positing of a Father-Mother-Son triad; (5) the positing of an evil demiurge (e.g. Yaldabaoth); (6) the concept of the three ages of history.

[280] F. Wisse, "Stalking those elusive Sethians", in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism (Vol.2): Sethian Gnosticism* (ed. B. Layton; Leiden: Brill, 1981) 574; Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism",* 12.

challenged the "false assumption" of taking Gnostic texts as the teachings of a sect.[281] The term "Sethian" was not used by Irenaeus of the (so-called) Sethian mythology he recounts (AH 1.29.1); Clement of Alexandria seems to indicate that the name "Sethian" originated from the heresiologists (Str. 7.108.1-2).[282] Rasimus, by proposing a division of the "Sethian" category into Ophite and Barbeloite, puts further pressure on the integrity of the category.[283] Wisse proposes that the Gnostic texts are the creations of individuals, not a community, and that any recurring themes should be treated as "free-floating theologumena and mythologumena".[284] However, there is some evidence that the Gnostics may have been a religious movement, such as the recurring references to ritual baptism;[285] the possible burial site of Roman Gnostics,[286] and the use of the term *gnōstikoi* by Irenaeus, Celsus and Porphyry.[287]

For the purposes of this thesis it is not necessary to determine whether shared mythologumena represents a single social entity or loosely connected individuals; it is sufficient to group mythologies together into working categories. I have divided Sethian Gnosticism in three categories: Barbeloite, Ophite and Platonizing.[288] My analysis of these categories is not exhaustive across all texts and reports that could fall under them: my analysis gives a representative sample by which to establish Gnostic concepts. In addition, I have considered three cognate systems – Simonians, Basilideans and Valentinians – which have grouped under the title "The Heresiarchs".

ii. Dating Gnosticism

Our sources for Gnosticism and cognate systems are the reports from Christian heresiologists, which may be unreliable, or Gnostic texts, which usually do not preserve autobiographical information about their authors. In either case, identifying the date and provenance of the system is difficult. We have some fixed points. The *Nag Hammadi* codices date from the mid-fourth century but it is likely that many texts were originally composed much earlier. The reports of heresiologists like Irenaeus (late second) and Hippolytus (early third), require earlier dating for the systems on which they report; in some cases the heresiologists clearly regard the mythologies they report on as representative of contemporary adherents. Biographical details about heresiarchs such as Valentinus make issues of dating and provenance easier, although here we face difficulties of heresiologists conflating the ideas of such individuals and their later followers.

Despite these difficulties, we can give ball-park figures for the systems under consideration. The Barbeolite mythology is known to Irenaeus and almost certainly inspired Valentinus, indicating that this mythology, in its earlier iterations at least, was

[281] Wisse, "Sethians", 575.
[282] Wisse, "Sethians", 563.
[283] T. Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythology: Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 2009) 40. Rasimus considers the Ophites to be an "ideal type, which usually, as such, does not even exist" (55). Rasimus classifies Ophite mythology according to the following criteria: 1) eating of the tree is positive, 2) seven archons, 3) a female aspect of the Godhead as salvic Sophia/Eve figure, 4) a male aspect of the Godhead as Man/Adam figure (57).
[284] Wisse, "Sethians", 576.
[285] Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism",* 91.
[286] A. H. B. Logan, *The Gnostics: Identifying an Early Christian Cult* (London: T&T Clark, 2006) 89ff.
[287] See A. H. B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) 3ff.
[288] This latter category does not imply that other Gnostics were not influenced by Platonism.

probably in existence by the mid-second century. The Ophite mythology is also known to Irenaeus and probably inspired the Basilidean mythology (as reported by Hippolytus), again indicating that it existed by the mid-second century (in its earlier iterations). The Platonizing Gnostics were known to Plotinus, and may be a precedent for *The Great Declaration* (as reported by Hippolytus). This probably indicates a late second century origin for these ideas, even if the main textual witnesses are later redactions (see below). The heresiarch systems are reported by Irenaeus and/or Hippolytus, and so must date from the second century; the Simonians may have origins in the first century. Therefore, all the systems under consideration fit within the pre-Plotinian period of my thesis.

iii. The Origins of Gnosticism

Numerous precursors of Gnosticism have been identified, including "Egyptian mythology, Hellenistic speculation, Zoroastrian dualism and Jewish apocalypticism; Chaldean astrology, Phygian sensuality, and the baptizing sects of Palestine".[289] Recent scholarship has focused on the Jewish background for Sethian Gnosticism, not least because of the recurrence of the figure of Sophia, who is undoubtedly "a Gnostic adaption of the personified Wisdom" of Jewish literature.[290] Given the absence of divine triads within Judaism, we might conclude that any Gnostic triad was of their own invention. However, there are a number of other possible precedents for Gnostic ideas.

It is likely that the Gnostics were influenced by Platonism. Turner notes some ideas that may have attracted Platonists to Gnosticism, or may have been influenced by them; including dualism and a tendency to withdraw from the world, the descent of the soul and a focus on many divinities and intermediaries.[291] I will note significant parallels in my analysis. There are also possible pagan precedents for Gnostic ideas. Grant proposes that the myth of the descent of Astarte may form the basis for the Simonian myth of the fall of Ennoia (= Helena).[292] Goehring proposes a connection between the fall of Sophia and the myth of the birth of Typhaeon.[293] Charron draws attention to the parallels between the hymn of Pronoia and the account of the descent of the soul in an alchemical text.[294] I have argued for a background in Egyptian mythology for both the Ophite and Barbeolite mythologies.[295] The Egyptian precedents might be particularly significant given that divine triads (triple-male and familial) are found in Egyptian religion.[296]

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[289] B. Walker, *Gnosticism: Its History and Influence* (Wellingborough: Crucible, 1989) 12; cf. K. Rudolph, *Gnosis: the nature and history of an ancient religion* (trans. R. McLachlan Wilson; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983) 278-285.

[290] G. W. MacRae, "The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth", *Novum Testamentum* 12:2 (1970) 86-101.

[291] Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 7.

[292] R. M. Grant, "The Earliest Christian Gnosticism", *Church History* 22.2 (1953) 86-7. Helena was reported to be a prostitute from Tyre and is associated with the moon (*Clementine Recognitions* 2.12); Ishtar-Astarte was the lunar goddess of Tyre and worshipped with ritual prostitution (Lucian, *Dea Syria* 4).

[293] J. E. Goehring, "A Classical Influence on the Gnostic Sophia Myth", *Vigiliae Christianae* 35.1 (1981) 16-23. Zeus brings forth Athena from his head without union (cf. Ennoia). This angers Hera who, in response, brings force a son without Zeus (cf. Sophia). The child produced by Hera is the monster Typhaeon, described as having a hundred snake-heads with eyes that flash fire (cf. Yaldabaoth).

[294] R. Charron, "The *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II,1) and the Graeco-Egyptian Alchemical Literature", *Vigiliae Christianae* 59.4 (2005) 444-8.

[295] T. E. Gaston, "The Egyptian Background of Gnostic Mythology", *Numen* (forthcoming); cf. D. M. Parrott, "Gnosticism and Egyptian Religion", *Novum Testamentum* 29:1 (1987) 73-93.

[296] Cf. Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*.

The other precedent that needs to be considered is Christianity, because it is, at least, conceivable that Gnostic triads are based on some early Christian triad (or triadic language). Gnosticism is presented by the heresiologists as a departure from (and challenge to) Christianity: many of the Gnostic texts contain Christian motifs, and the existence of cognate Christian heresies (e.g. Valentinianism) is indicative of the interaction between Christianity and Gnosticism. Key Gnostic concepts, like the motif of a heavenly redeemer, may be dependent on Christianity.[297] Whilst it is acknowledged that the Christian frame-story of the *Apocryphon of John* is secondary (cf. Irenaeus),[298] even without these trappings the text contains Christian elements like identifying the Son as "Christ" and the subordination of all things to him (or the Self-Originate, cf. Irenaeus; cf. 1 Cor 15:25-28). All the names of the primary aeons, except *autogenes,* occur as terms within NT texts, often as attributes of God and/or Christ (1 Cor 2:16; Col 3:16; 1 Thes 5:18). Both Pétrement and Logan have argued that only Christianity provides sufficient rationale for the reversal of values exhibited by Gnosticism.[299] Whether Gnosticism was a Jewish phenomenon later Christianized or primarily a Christian movement, there are certainly strong Christian influences upon Gnostic mythologies. Therefore, one key task will be to evaluate whether Gnostic triads are influenced by Christianity.

b. Sethian ("Classic") Gnosticism

i. "Barbeloite" Gnosticism

Introduction

For many scholars, the central myth of "classic" Gnosticism is that myth found in the *Apocryphon of John* and recorded in summary by Irenaeus.[300] Irenaeus himself believes his summary to be of "the principal opinions" of the Gnostics (AH 1.29.1), but he also describes the opinions of "others" (AH 1.30.1), so talk of any "central" myth might be misjudged. Nevertheless, many of the ideas expressed in this mythology recur in other texts from Nag Hammadi, as well as influencing the mythologies of Basilideans and Valentinians, thus there is some sense in which this mythology is iconic. The descriptions "Barbeloite" and "Ophite" were later applied to mythologies summarised in AH 1.29 and AH 1.30 respectively, although whether these are anything more than convenient tags created by heresiologists is uncertain.

I will proceed on the assumption that Irenaeus knew an earlier version of the same text that became the *Apocryphon.* On this assumption, we know of three versions of the text: (a) the text summarised by Ireaneus, (b) a short recession (III.1; BG.2)[301] and (c) a long

[297] Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism,* 163-5; cf. Wisse, "Sethians", 571

[298] B. Pearson,*Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature*(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) 63

[299]Pétrement, *Separate God,* 10-15; Logan, *Gnostic Truth,* xviii. Pétrement argues that Gnosticism derived from Valentinianism, whereas Logan believes Gnosticism to be precedent for Valentinianism.

[300] Cf. B. Layton, The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introductions (Doubleday, 1987) 12.

[301]The two major differences are the inclusion in the long recession of a discussion of demons and how they created various parts of the body (14.15-20.5; this material is attributed to the "book of Zoroaster"; cf. 19.10), and the hymn of Pronoia (30.11-31.25). The general consensus seems to be that the short recession has priority, and the long recession expanded on this version. However, this consensus is not universal, and some have argued that the "additions" in the longer recession are actually integral to the unity of the text (A. K. Helmbold, "The *Apocryphon of John*: A Case Study in Literary Criticism", *JETS*13:3 (1970) 176-8).

recession (II.1; IV.1). The first (a) must predate Irenaeus' account (c.185), the latter two (b,c) must predate the copies extant (c.350); more precise dating is impossible. If a version of this mythology was known to Valentinus then its origin must be early second century.

(a) Gnostic Text; according to Irenaeus

Summary

The first principle of this mythology is "a certain father", who is unnameable. He is introduced as wishing to reveal himself to Barbelo: in consequence Thought was emanated and stood in his presence. Following her emanation, Thought requests further emanations: Prior Acquaintance, Incorruptibility and Eternal Life. Barbelo, rejoicing in these emanations, generated a "light similar to it" (Barbelo? Father? Thought?), who is identified as Christ. The Father anoints Christ with kindness to make him perfect. Christ then requests further emanations from Barbelo: Intellect, Word and Will. These emanations are joined in pairs and the eight magnify "the great light" (= Father) and Barbelo (AH 1.29.1).

From the conjunction of Thought and Word the Self-Originate emanates as an "image of the great light" and "the entirety was subordinated to him". Truth was also emanated (presumably from Thought and Word) and conjoined to the Self-Originate. From the conjunction of Christ and Incorruptibility emanated four luminaries (Armogenes, Raguel, Dauid, Eleleth), and from the conjunction of Will and Eternal Life emanated Grace, Perception, Understanding and Prudence, who are each connected with one of the four luminaries (1.29.2).

The Self-Originate then produced the perfect man, called Adamas, who was set apart from (or with [Layton]) Armogenes. A consort of Adamas, Perfect Knowledge, is also emanated from the Self-Originate, and so Adamas attains knowledge of the father. He was given "invisible power" by the father, and the entirety rested in him, giving praise to "the Great Aeon" (1.29.3).

Sophia emanates from "the first angel who stands by the side of the only-begotten".[302] Sophia is identified as the Holy Spirit. It is the lack of a consort that motivates Sophia to search the lower regions and ultimately to create, without the blessing of the father, a product without knowledge. This is identified as the "first ruler". He is carried away to the lower regions and in his ignorance formed the "earthly" creation. Being united with arrogance, he produces evil, jealousy, envy, discord and lust. Sophia, grieved by this, flees to the upper regions again and so the first ruler, in her absence, believes himself to be the sole being, saying "I am a jealous god, and there is none apart from me" (1.29.4).

Discussion

This account is strange and disjointed; emanations appear without prior introduction. It is possible that Irenaeus, intending only a cursory account, misses important connecting

[302]Who is "the first angel who stands by the side of the only-begotten"? We are not told but it is possible that this is Armogenes (= joint-begotten?); after all, angels are sometimes described as lights and Raguel is the name of an archangel in Judaism. Christ, presumably, is the only-begotten, though the luminaries do stand before the Self-Originate. If the luminaries are angels, and not abodes, then this might explain, in part, why Adamas is set apart from Armogenes rather than set within as in the *Apocryphon of John*. When separated from Adamas, Armogenes is also separated from Knowledge; in a reversal of the story of Eden, it is the angel that is cast out. Sophia, then, would emanate from Armogenes apart from knowledge. But why then would the Gnostics call Armogenes "saviour"?

information. However, his account *feels* like a close paraphrase of the source text, and textual parallels in the *Apocrpyhon of John* increase the likelihood that Irenaeus reproduces much of the original phraseology. This being the case, maybe it is the original text that is at fault. One wonders whether the Gnostic author was drawing together elements he didn't properly understand; why else would the Self-Originate not self-originate?

Layton identifies Barbelo with the emanating Thought,[303] as in the *Apocrpyhon of John*, but such identification is by no means necessary. In fact, if these two were only later identified, then it would explain the promotion of Truth in the *Apocryphon*. If such is the case, then Barbelo is passive in the original emanation; it is the father's desire to reveal himself that is the reason for the emanation of Thought, and consequently for everything that follows. The Father is not, therefore, the aloof God of later Gnosticism (and Platonism). Though he is described as "unnameable", he is not accorded (at least in Irenaeus' account) any of the familiar appellations of negative theology. Inasmuch as Barbelo seems to be independent of the Father, this mythology has two first principles, but Barbelo does not function as dyad or receptacle.

Whilst this summary is not explicitly triadic, it is apparent that the Gnostic author(s) believed there was a significant triad. After recounting how Adamas receives the invisible power and the entirety praises the Great Aeon, Irenaeus writes, "hence they say the mother, the father and the son were shown forth" (1.29.3). It is not clear whether this triad is shown forth in the perfection of Adamas or in the praises of the entirety. Nor is it clear to whom the triad is shown or in what way it is shown. However, the revelation of this primal triad is apparently of some significance to the Gnostics, implying a special place within their mythology. Given the special treatment of the emanation "Christ", being perfected by the Father, we may reasonably presume that the primal triad should be identified as Father-Barbelo-Christ.

(c) Long Recession; Apocryphon of John

Summary

The short and long recessions are essentially the same regarding the initial emanation of the aeons. I will consider only the long recession. The account begins with a revelatory vision of the primal triad: "I [am the Father], I am the Mother, I am the Son" (2.14). This appearance has a likeness with "three forms" (2.9), and yet is "[not a plurality] before me" (2.5). The triad, "the three", is later described as "the perfect power" (9.10-11). There is a sense of tri-unity here.

The Father is described as a monad and a monarch (2.26). He is "more than a god" (2.35). This negative theology continues with many appellations: "eternal" (3.3), "total perfection" (3.4-5), "[illimitable]" (3.7), "unsearchable" (3.9), "immeasurable" (3.10), "invisible" (3.12), "[ineffable]" (3.14), "unnameable" (3.16). He is also described as a "pure, immeasurable [mind]" (4.2; cf. 4.32). It is asserted that "[everything] exists in him" (3.2).

The Mother comes forth from the mind of the Father, by performing "a deed" (4.27-32); she is called "[thought]" (4.27) and "[forethought]" (4.33). She is the "first [power]" of the Father (4.30) and is his image (4.34). She is also accorded a long list of other

[303] Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 166

appellations: “womb of everything” (5.5), “the Mother-Father, the first man, the holy Spirit, the thrice-male, the thrice-powerful, the thrice-named androgynous one” (5.7-9), “mother of the living” (10.17-18). The Mother requests Foreknowledge and Barbelo consents (5.11-14). The Mother also requests, and is granted, Indestructibility (5.20-24), Eternal Life (4.26-30) and Truth (5.32-35). The “pentad of aeons” – presumably Thought, Foreknowledge, Indestructibility, Eternal Life and Truth – is identified as “the first man, the image of the invisible Spirit” (6.2-4); the same description afforded the Mother.

The Son is conceived of the Mother when the Father looks at her (6.12), and s/he begets a “spark of light” (6.13), but the Son “does not equal his greatness” (6.14-15). The Son is identified as “Christ” (7.2), “only-begotten” (6.15), and “Autogenes” (7.10-11). The Son is perfected by being anointed by the Father (6.19-32), which is presumably the same as the completion of the Holy Spirit (7.15-16). The Son requests as fellow workers Mind (7.1), Will (7.6) and Word (7.9). The Father subjected all things to the Son (7.25-30).

From the conjunction of Christ and Indestructibility proceeds the four lights (7.30-33) – Armozel, Oriel, Daveithai and Eleleth – these are aeons and abodes of Adamas, Seth, the seed of Seth and the ignorant souls respectively. From the conjunction of Foreknowledge and Will proceeds the perfect man (8.29-30), named “Pigera-Adamas” (8.34-35). The origins of Sophia are not explained, except that she is “of the Epinoia” (9.25). (Epinoia is later described as a helper from the Mother that is hidden in Adam to assist him towards his fullness and is identified as the tree of knowledge (19ff)). Sophia brings forth a “likeness” without the consent of the Father or her consort (9.26-35), for which reason this likeness is imperfect (10.4-5). She later repents of her action (14.1), and is corrected by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (14.7-9). The likeness that Sophia produces is named “Yaltabaoth” and “the first archon” (10.20). He begets aeons and authorities (10.28ff) and 365 angels (19.2-3). He creates according to “the model of the first aeons” (12.34-35). In his arrogance, Yaltabaoth declares, “I am a jealous God and there is no other God beside me” (13.8-9).

Discussion

Comparing the *Apocryphon* with Irenaeus’ account, we find the general flow of the story is the same but there have been several modifications. There are too many changes to warrant the theory that Irenaeus simply made errors in his report. These changes are more satisfactorily explained as doctrinal or mythological developments.

There is greater emphasis on negative theology in this account than in Irenaeus’. This is plausibly explained through the influence of Platonism, particularly given the reference to the Father as a monad and to a number of the appellations that recur in Platonic writings. It is interesting that the Father is still explicitly described as a mind, when by the third century Platonists were describing the First God as above mind.

The emanation of the Mother is by “a deed”, presumably an act of thinking; she is later described as “the thinking of the virginal Spirit” (31.11-13). This may be akin to the emanation of Nous in Middle Platonism. The reconciliation of the Mother and Thought seems to marginalise the name Barbelo, which occurs only rarely and enigmatically. It also results in a monistic mythology with all things proceeding from the Father (= monad). This shift may be akin to transformation of the dyad from a primary to a secondary principle (cf. Eudorus), and from a passive to an active principle (cf.

Plutarch). The various descriptions given to the Mother also seem indicative of the rationalisation of many figures from other mythologies into a single figure. It is significant that the Mother is now identified as the Holy Spirit, a name previously associated with Sophia. Identifying the Mother as the "womb of everything" may make her akin to the Receptacle (cf. *Chaldean Oracles*), though she gives birth to a spiritual, not a physical, creation.

The conception of the Son now involves the Father more directly, by his looking at the Mother. The figure of the Self-Originate is now incorporated into the figure of the Son, and so the emanation of Adamas is ascribed to Foreknowledge and Will (rather than the Self-Originate and Truth). The Son seems to have acquired some creative function, although this cannot include the creation of the world. Perhaps his creativity is fulfilled in the emanation of the four light-aeons, which are four spiritual abodes.

There are many other changes. Truth is promoted to an emanation of the Mother. The four light-aeons are named differently and now serve as abodes. The origin of Sophia is also different. The freedom with which these changes have taken place seems indicative of a dynamic mythology whose adherents were not concerned with faithfulness to any set of scriptures, however much they may have borrowed from them.

As evidenced by the introductory vision, the Gnostic author(s) attached some significance to the revelation of the primal triad: Father-Mother-Son. This triad has some parallels with Platonic triads. For example, the mother emanating by an act of thought of the father is akin to a procession of Numenius' second god and Plotinus' Intellect, although strictly speaking for the Platonists, it is the second who contemplates the first. The generation of the Son is described, not as an act of procreation, but as the Father looking on the Mother and the Mother forming an image of the Father. This is similar to the intellectual creation of Numenius' second god by contemplation of the first. Whilst the Gnostic triad is not explicitly identified as three minds, they are clearly considered to be persons, which was probably of greater significance to the Gnostics. Also, the creation is not explicitly identified as an intellectual creation (or as the Forms) but is a spiritual creation and does serve as a model for Yaldabaoth. Turner suggests that "the very nomenclature of the Sethians' supreme Father-Mother-Child trinity was probably inspired by Plato's triad of principles in *Tim.* 50c-d".[304] However, whilst the Mother does take on some of the descriptions of the Receptacle, the Father does not have a demiurgic function. As we have seen, the familial nomenclature featured in Irenaeus' report, and so may have non-Platonic antecedents.

The switch from identifying the Holy Spirit with Sophia (as in Irenaeus' account) to identifying it with the Mother brings the Gnostic triad closer to the Christian Trinity. Of course, the Holy Spirit is not described as the mother of Christ by Christians, but it was sometimes described in the feminine (cf. *Odes of Solomon* 19).

[304]J. D. Turner, "The Platonizing Sethian Treatises, Marius Victorinus's Philosophical Sources, and Pre-Plotinian *Parmenides* Commentaries" in *Plato's Parmenides and its Heritage: History and Interpretation from the Old Academy to Later Platonism and Gnosticism* (eds. J. Turner & K. Corrigan; Atlanta: SBL, 2010) 141. "It is in fact appropriate to compare the receiving thing to a mother, the source to a father, and the nature between them to their offspring" (Tim 50d).

ii. "Ophite" Gnosticism

Introduction

In AH 1.30 Irenaeus summarises a second Gnostic mythology, which he ascribes to "others"; these were later identified as "Ophites". In *Contra Celsum,* Origen describes a diagram that he also ascribes to the Ophites. Finally, Rasimus has identified some of the Nag Hammadi texts which he believes should also be classified as Ophite. Whether or not there was some grouping of Gnostics distinct from "Barbeloite" or other Sethians which might correspond to this category, the parallels between the sources (and the possibility of interdependence) justifies their grouping. For our purposes, the Ophite grouping is significant, because it witnesses to a second Gnostic triad.

In this section I will consider these "Ophite" sources in what we might reasonably suppose to be chronological order. This may give grounds for interpreting differences between the sources as developments.

Gnostic Text, summarised by Irenaeus

Summary

The first principle of this myth is the "father of all" (AH 1.30.2). He exists in "the power of the deep [Bythus]", and is described as "primary light, blessed, incorruptible, and infinite" (1.30.1). He is the "first man". From the father is emanated his offspring "thought" [Ennoia] (1.30.1). He is the "second man". Below the father and the son, but above the primeval elements, is the holy spirit, who is also called "first woman" and "mother of the living" (1.30.2; cf. Ap. John 10.17-18). The father and the son shed their light on the woman producing Christ, who is called the "third man". These four constitute the true church [Ecclesia] (1.30.2).

The father and the son both have intercourse with the woman; it is not clear whether this is considered as a separate act from the shedding light described above. The woman could not contain the excess of lights, which then overflow on the left side. For some reason not explained, this results in Christ, who is situated on the right side, being drawn up immediately into the incorruptible realm with the woman, his mother (1.30.2). The overflow of light on the left side is Sophia, also called "left" [Sinistra] and "vulgar element" [Prunicus]. She falls down from her parents and descends into the waters, thus setting them in motion. Sophia becomes encased in matter, which becomes her body. She desires to ascend to her mother but is unable, and instead ascends to form the visible heaven from her body. Sophia remains below heaven until she receives power to put from her body and becomes free (1.30.3). Sophia's offspring is Ialdabaoth, who proclaims himself the highest god and parent.

Discussion

Once again, it seems that Irenaeus is summarizing some Gnostic text. Rasimus cites *Hypostasis of Archons* and *On the Origin of the World* for comparison,[305] but these seem to be more developed in several important aspects. Irenaeus' source must predate his composition (c.185).

In contrast with the mythology recorded in AH 1.29, the Ophite myth puts a greater emphasis on tragedy than imprudence. Sophia is created out of an overflow of light; it is by virtue of this creation that she falls, not because of any sin. The visible heaven is

[305] Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 10

formed as a consequence of her efforts to return to the incorruptible realm. The emanation of Ialdabaoth is not described, which in itself may be significant. And Ialdabaoth does not produce evils such as jealousy and death directly, although they come from the snake he produces in his despair. In a sense, the blame for the evils of the material world should be laid upon the father and the son for their (excessive) intercourse with the woman.

This mythology is also restrained with regards to the incorruptible realm. There are not numerous aeons, only the members of the true church. This restraint would seem to indicate that the mythology belongs to a separate tradition, later combined with the Barbeloite. However, both mythologies seem to share the fall of Sophia and the arrogant proclamation of the first ruler/Ialdabaoth, perhaps indicating that both are drawing independently on some third tradition.

There is an explicit male triad: Father-Son-Christ. This triad also has a clear hierarchy. The Son proceeds from the Father as the emanation of his thought; Christ proceeds from the woman by virtue of light shed upon her. There is, presumably, some significance in the hierarchy of three ideal men, but this significance is not made obvious. This is not, for instance, a progression of descending paradigms; it is the first man who serves as the paradigm for the creation of material humans. It is also odd that the highest deity should be described as a man; it may be because of the perceived impiety that in the *Apocryphon of John* it is Barbelo who inherits the designation "first man" (Ap. John 5.7). The role of the second man is never clearly stated; the Father is first principle and Christ is the saviour of the "holy souls". The Son does nothing in the account other than participating in joint intercourse.

Rasimus proposes that the "interpretative key" lies in Gen 1:26-27 and Gen 5:1-3; God creates Adam in his own image and Adam begets Seth in his image. He also notes that Eve is called "mother of the living" in Gen 3:20 LXX.[306] He further proposes that Gen 4:25, where Eve credits God with giving her Seth, is the origin of the concept of Father and Son both having intercourse with the woman.[307] However, in a later work he seems to reject this explanation, stating that the Ophites do not "assign any importance to Seth".[308] He proposes instead that the third man comes from a division of Christological functions, speculating that Son and Christ are two aspects of one figure. Rasimus draws comparisons with Middle Platonic higher and lower world soul in defence of this proposal.[309] For myself, I find his former proposal more plausible, as neither Son or Christ are psychical. Nevertheless, I have proposed elsewhere that the background of this mythology is found in Egyptian religion. The three men are primarily three male deities; their significance as a reinterpretation of Genesis is secondary.

Given the significance that other Gnostic texts place upon a father-mother-son triad, we may be tempted to see a second triad in this account. After all, the first woman is described as a mother and there is clearly a relationship between the woman and the

[306]T. Rasimus, "Ophite Gnosticism, Sethianism and the Nag Hammadi Library", *Vigiliae Christianae* 59 (2005) 257. Edwards adds "the formula 'man exists and the son of man' might not be so perplexing to Rasimus if he recalled that this sequence recurs at Mark 2;27-8 and Heb 2:6 (a quotation of Ps 8:4)"; M. Edwards, review of T Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, *JTS* 62 (2011) 347-8.
[307] Rasimus, "Ophite Gnosticism", 258.
[308] Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 176.
[309] Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 179.

father and the son. However, although the woman is a mother, she is not the mother of the son. She is, in fact, described as being below the father and the son, and only ascends to the incorruptible realm after the birth of Christ. She is listed as the fourth member of the true church. The origins of the mother are also unclear: Irenaeus or his source does not state whether she is primal or an emanation. She may be viewed as some kind of separation between the incorruptible realm and the primeval waters, perhaps like the holy spirit in Basilidean mythology (see below).

The Ophite Diagram

Summary

Both Celsus and Origen, who preserves his testimony, are acquainted with a diagram, which Origen identifies from some of its features as Ophite (*Contra Celsum* 6.24). The two diagrams, the one Celsus drew (6.24) and the one Origen obtained sight of (6.30), seem to be essentially the same, despite some discrepancies in the way they are reported.[310] In addition, both Celsus and Origen report how the diagram was used and Origen even endeavours to offer some interpretation of it, though neither writer is without polemic flourish. The significance of this testimony, despite the rhetoric, is that it provides independent testimony of the mythology described by Irenaeus.[311] It is regrettable that no copy of the diagram is extant; numerous attempts to reconstruct the diagram reveal that no reconstruction is possible without assumptions.[312]

Let us assume that the diagram represents a linear ascent from the material realm to the Father, as seems to be implied. Let us also assume that Origen, in describing the diagram and accompanying ritual, follows the ascent in sequence, although he may be simply addressing the statements of Celsus in turn. At the material end of the diagram there are ten (often emended to "seven") circles (6.25). These are probably coordinate with the "seven ruling demons" (6.30; cf. AH1.30.5; 1.30.8).[313] These circles are encompassed by another circle, labelled "Leviathan", identified as the World Soul. The diagram is divided, presumably above this circle, with a thick black line labelled "Gehenna" (6.25). Origen then recounts how the initiate has to pass through seven gates – called the "fence of wickedness" – each gate subject to one of the seven rulers (6.31). Above this are the gates of Paradise (6.33).

The other part of the diagram, which we can only presume is to be placed directly above, is composed of two sets of circles separated by a barrier in the shape of an axe. Celsus describes these sets of circles as those "above the heavens". One set is composed of a "greater" circle containing a "lesser". This set is inscribed with "Father and Son". The other set has two circles, an outer yellow circle and an inner blue circle. The significance of yellow and blue, and whatever inscription these circles might have borne, is not disclosed.

Two more circles are described, one inscribed "love" and another "life". This life-circle contains two more: "knowledge" and "understanding", and a rhomboid shape, "the foresight of wisdom". Where these shapes intersect are inscribed the words "the nature of wisdom". The placement of the love-circle and the life-circle is unclear. These are

[310] Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 15.
[311] Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 20.
[312] A. J. Welburn, "Reconstructing the Ophite Diagram", *Novum Testamentum* 23.3 (1981) 283; Logan, *The Gnostics*, 42; Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 68.
[313] *Pace* Welburn, "Ophite Diagram", 263.

described as being above the axe-barrier, but also as touching the Father-circle. This may cohere better with Welburn's horizontal orientation[314] than with the vertical orientation of other reconstructions. Nevertheless, with so little information, it is difficult to be sure.

Discussion

The diagram, as we have summarised it, seems to parallel many aspects of Irenaeus' account. Humankind exists in the material realm, ruled over by the "lower septet" (30.9) of the seven worldly demons. These are the snake, who was cast down from heaven, and his six offspring (30.8). This snake may parallel Leviathan in the diagram. The Gehenna-line divides the world from the seven heavens (cf. 30.5). In the heavenly section of the diagram, we find the seven gates and paradise (30.8). The seven rulers preside over the seven gates; over the septet is the "one-formed king" who completes the Ogdoad (*Contra Celsum* 6.31) – he may parallel the mother, who occupies the eighth position (AH 1.30.4).[315] What is not clear is whether the super-heavenly section of the diagram includes the yellow and blue circles, or whether it is divided from these circles by the axe-barrier. The latter seems more plausible, else how is it a barrier?

Welburn, from a line in Talmud, argues that the yellow line is the boundary of the primordial chaos, and so encompasses the material world (including the seven circles and the Leviathan circle).[316] Rasimus simply states that the identity of the blue and yellow circles "remain obscure".[317] However, parallels with Irenaeus' account may assist us. The only remaining entities between the seven rulers and the super-heavenly beings are the body left by Sophia ("female from female"), which forms the visible heavens; and the primeval waters. Perhaps the former is represented by a yellow circle and the latter by a blue circle.

What primarily concerns us is the super-heavenly realm. Do the elements within the diagram coordinate with those who dwell in the incorruptible realm? During the rites of the seven gates the father is invoked on many occasions, sometimes with the son. There is also reference to "spirit of providence" and "wisdom". Most significantly, a "mightier pentad" is also invoked (*Contra Celsum* 6.31). Celsus also mentions "a power flowing from one Prunicus" (6.34). Only Christ is not mentioned. Can this pentad be coordinated with elements of the diagram? The Father and the Son are labelled. It has been noted in several reconstructions that the axe-shaped barrier could have been formed by another unmentioned circle. Welburn has the Father and yellow circles intersect with a third circle to form the barrier. Logan imposes the love and life circles on another circle. The significant point is that in either case, the barrier is not just a division on the diagram but may represent a distinct entity. Welburn identifies this third circle as the first woman (= holy spirit).[318] Even if the axe-shape is intended as a barrier or limit, it still might be identified as the holy spirit as that is the role ascribed to the holy spirit in later mythologies (cf. Basilides). Regarding the love and life circles, if both are touching the Father-circle and yet one is in some sense above the other, then depending on how one orientates the diagram then the one might be to the left of the other. The significance of

[314] Welburn, "Ophite Diagram", 275.
[315] Since the "one-formed king" is described as the bond of blindness, and since in Irenaeus the snake is named Samael (i.e. "blind god"; 1.30.9), perhaps the authors of this diagram are the same as those others whom, according to Irenaeus, say that Sophia herself became the snake (I.30.15).
[316] Welburn, "Ophite Diagram", 275-6
[317] Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 18.
[318] Welburn, "Ophite Diagram", 284.

such a positioning is that, in Irenaeus' account, Christ is on the right of the first woman and Sophia overflows on the left. It is possible that the love-circle should be identified with Christ, though this is speculation. Rasimus identifies the life-circle with the first woman, as she is called the "mother of the living".[319] However, since this circle is inscribed inside with "nature of Sophia" and "providence of Sophia", identification with Sophia would be warranted.

The fact that the Son-circle is contained within the Father-circle is presumably a representation of the Son as the thought of the Father. It would be tempting to speculate as to what extent this image should be taken ontologically. It is obvious that the Son is lesser than the Father. If the holy spirit is to be identified with the barrier then her role is different to that of the Father and the Son. She marks the limit of the super-heavenly; she does not rule in it. If Christ is identified as the love-circle then he, unlike the Son, is outside the Father-circle, though close to it. This presumably represents the fact that Christ is not an emanation of the Father, but a creation. Irenaeus' account had an explicit triad in the numbering of the three men. We do not find the same triad explicitly represented in the diagram. The titles; "first man", "second man", etc, are not used.

Eugnostos the Blessed / Sophia of Jesus Christ[320]

Rasimus identifies four of the Nag Hammadi texts as belonging to the "Ophite" tradition: *Eugnostus* (cf. *Sophia of Jesus Christ*), *On the Origin of the World*, *Hypostasis of Archons* and *Apocryphon of John*. We have already considered the *Apocryphon* in its Barbeloite aspect, which certainly seems to take precedence in its first principles. The Father is no longer identified as the first man; that title is given to the Barbelo (Ap. John 5.7). In both *Hypostasis* and *Origin* the amalgamation of Barbeloite and Ophite mythologies has already occurred. *Eugnostos* is significant as it is the only Nag Hammadi text that explicitly replicates the triad of three males found in the Ophite mythology.[321] Though *Eugnostos* has routinely been dated early,[322] it seems most plausible to date the text to the early fourth century.[323]

Summary

Eugnostos begins by considering the question of how the world is ordered. The author immediately rejects the opinions of "all the philosophers" (70.15), whose answers he identifies as being self-direction, providence or fate (70.16-21). He dismisses each with a pithy repost (71.1-5). He urges the reader to "get free of these three voices" and follow "another voice"; to confess the "God of truth" (71.6-10).

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[319] Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered*, 18.

[320] Translation: D. M. Parrott, "Eugnostos the Blessed and The Sophia of Jesus Christ", in *The Nag Hammadi Library.*

[321] Rasimus, "Ophite Gnosticism", 256.

[322]Parrott, "Gnosticism and Egyptian Religion", 78-9; J. L. Sumney, "The Letter of Eugnostos and the Origins of Gnosticism", *Novum Testamentum* 31:2 (1989) 174-178;

[323]Painchaud's literary and compositional analysis of *Eugnostos* and *Origin* demonstrates that they were "intended as two complementary parts of a single design". Since *Origin* is usually dated to early fourth century (H-G. Bethge & O. S. Wintermute, "On the Origin of the World (II,5 and XIII,2)" in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (ed. J. M. Robinson; Leiden: Brill, 1984) 170), this should be the date assigned to *Eugnostos* (L. Painchaud, "The Literary Contacts Between The Writing Without Title *On the Origin of the World* (CG II,5 and XIII,2) and *Eugnostos the Blessed*(CG III,3 and V,1)", *JBL*114:1 (1995) 81-101).

This "true God" (74.11) is the "Unbegotten Father", also called "forefather" (74.21) and "father of the universe" (73.2-3; cf. 74.20-21). He is called "He Who Is" (71.13; cf. Ex 3:14 LXX). The author proceeds with a series of appellations of negative theology (71.21-24). This negative theology is designed to illustrate that the Unbegotten Father is before and above all things. Though the Unbegotten Father is unknowable, he knows himself (72.19-21) and so is a mind. In fact, the author describes him as "all mind, thought and reflecting, considering, rationality and power" (73.9-11). These various descriptions of cognitive functions will later be coordinated with the successive layers of reality (83:5-10).[324] It is as though the entire immortal realm proceeds as an act of introspection; all these exist in the "foreknowledge of Unbegotten" (73.15-16).

This introspection begins with the Self-Father. The Unbegotten Father "sees himself within himself, like a mirror" (75.3-4) and this likeness is the Self-Father. This is a timeless generation, the Self-Father being "of equal age" with the Unbegotten Father, but not of equal power (75.10-12).

The Self-Father "decided" that his likeness should become a great power, and so appears the Immortal Man (76.19-24), also called "First Man" (78.3-4; cf. 78.23). Unlike the Unbegotten Father and the Self-Father, who appear to be purely male and without consort, the Immortal Man is androgynous. His male aspect is named "[Begotten], Perfect [Mind]" (77.2); his female aspect is named "All-Wise Begettress Sophia" (77.3-4) and she is both sister and consort (77.5-6). The Immortal Man is described as having "a unique mind (and) thought", but also as being thought (78.6-7; cf. V.7.25). The Immortal Man appears "in the beginning" (76.19; cf. V.8.1), indicating a temporal beginning; however, he is equal in "imperishableness" (78.11).

When the Immortal Man has received consent from his consort, another principle is "revealed" (V.8.33), who is called "First Begetter Father" (81.10-11), "Adam of Light" (81.12) and "Son of Man" (81.13). Like the Immortal Man, he is androgynous; his male aspect is named "First-Begotten Son of God" (V.9.2).[325] His female aspect is "[First-]Begotten Sophia, Mother of the Universe" (9.4-5), "whom some call 'Love'" (9.5-6).

When the Son of Man consents with his consort, another light is revealed (81.21-25). His name is "Savior, Begetter of All Things" (82.2-3); his female name is "Sophia, All Begettress" (82.5); "some call her Pistis" (82.5-6).

A sixth immortal, Arch-Begetter (= Yaldabaoth), is included in *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (BG 119.14-16) and in *Origin.*[326] In *Origin*, we find that after the completion of the immortals (II.98.11-12), Pistis emanated a "likeness" called Sophia, who "functioned as a veil dividing mankind from the things above" (98.22-23). Also from Pistis derived a "shadow", which gave birth to matter "like an aborted fetus". Pistis became disturbed by

[324] These cognitive functions are co-ordinated with numerology (e.g. Thought = Monad, Reflecting = Decad, etc.; cf. III.78.17-24 / V.7.23-29). It also seems possible that the author intended to co-ordinate Thought with the Immortal Man (III.78.7; V.7.25) and Will/Power with 360 powers (83.19-20).

[325] The identification of "son of man" and "son of god" make it unlikely that *Eugnostos* is a pre-Christian or non-Christian text.

[326] Painchaud, "Origin and Eugnostos", 86. If we accepted Painchaud's thesis that *Origin* was intended as the complement or sequel to *Eugnostos* then we might suppose that the Arch-Begetter was not included in *Eugnostos* because the author always intended to describe those matters elsewhere.

this sight and blew into the matter, forming it into a likeness, an androgynous ruler called "Yaldabaoth" and "Arch-Begetter" (99.3-100.14).

Unbegotten Father	
Self-Father	
Immortal Man	
Begotten Perfect Mind	All-Wise Begettress Sophia
Son of Man (= First Begetter Father)	
First-Begotten Son of God	First-Begotten Sophia
Saviour (= Son of Son of Man)	
Savior, Begetter of All Things	Sophia, All Begettress (= Pistis)
Arch-Begetter (= Yaldabaoth)	Sophia

Discussion

Irenaeus' Ophites had a scheme of a male triad alongside two females, the Holy Spirit and Sophia. *Eugnostos*, by comparison, has a more complex scheme of two principles and three androgynous pairs (four, if we count Yaldabaoth). Such multiplication of immortals leads to a level of redundancy within the scheme. Looking first at the females; for the Ophites, each of the two females had a clearly defined function within their mythology. The Holy Spirit was the mother of the living and a firmament between the super-celestial realm and the world. Sophia was the creative principle, the excess of light that fell and stirred the primeval waters. In contrast, *Eugnostos* has several Sophias, but without any clear function in the mythology, except as a consenting consort. It is only when we come to the origins of the world-ruler, Yaldabaoth, that Pistis Sophia takes an active role (this narrative occurs in *Origin*). Similarly, the multiplication of males leads to redundancy. The Ophite male triad was designed around the concept of the immortals as a paradigm for human beings ("the image of God"); the father (= first man) was the paradigm after which human beings were created (AHI.30.6). This scheme is disrupted by a more emphatic negative theology that explicitly denies the Unbegotten Father human form (III.72.3-6). The Self-Father, added as a platonic intermediary, is also not the paradigm of humanity, but functions only as the paradigm for Immortal Man.

The remnants of the Ophite male triad are seen in the titles given to the immortals. The Immortal Man is called "First Man" (78.3-4); his son is called "Son of Man" (81.13). The three are also numbered as "first aeon", "second aeon" (85.9-12) and "third" (V.13.12-13). The Immortal Man is called "man of the depth" (V.6.20), perhaps the remnant of the first man existing in the deep (AH 1.30.1).[327] The third is called "son of son of man" and also "saviour", a de-christianised equivalent of Christ.[328]

The remnants of the Diagram also seem to occur in *Eugnostos.* The author explains "in respect to power, there is a difference, like the difference between father and son, and son and thought, and the thought and the remainder" (78.9-15). In this case, "father" and "son" are presumably Unbegotten Father and Self-Father respectively; thought is equivalent with Immortal Man (78.6-7). However, "father" and "son" as titles feel too casual and unqualified for the author of *Eugnostos* and are more likely remnants of an earlier version of the mythology, such as that found in the Diagram. This triad of father-son-thought is indicative of the way the original Ophite triad has been divided across five immortal males. It is also likely that the puzzling "Love" and "Life" reoccur in

[327] Rasimus, "Ophite Gnosticism", 257.
[328] In *Origin* "Christ" occurs in relation to Sabaoth (114.17).

Eugnostos. The son of man, in his female aspect, is named "Love" (V.9.5-6). This is inconsistent with our conclusion above that the love-circle is identified with Christ, though the division of the Ophite triad in *Eugnostos* may explain this. "Life" is identified with "assembly" (87.5), which might either be identified with the third aeon (86.17; = savior, or his female aspect) or "the assembly of the [Eighth]" (87.1), with Pistis Sophia. In either case, this would seem to support our conclusion above that the life-circle is to be identified with Sophia (cf. 87.6-8).

Ophite mythology (AH 1.30)		**Ophite Diagram**		***Eugnostos***	
				Unbegotten Father	
				Self-Father	
First Man: "father of all", "power of the deep"		Father		Immortal Man: "first man", "father", "man of the depth"	All-Wise Begettress Sophia
Second Man: "thought", "son"	First Woman: "holy spirit", "mother of the living"	Son	Axe-barrier: holy spirit?	Son of Man: "Adam of Light"	First-Begotten Sophia: "mother of the universe", "love"
Third Man: "Christ"	Sophia: "left", "vulgar"	Love: Christ?	Life: Sophia, "mother of the living"	Saviour: "son of son of man"	All Begettress Sophia: "Pistis"
Ialdabaoth				Arch-Begetter: Yaldabaoth	Pistis Sophia: "assembly", "life"

Parrott suggests the origin of the three-male triad is based on Gen 1-3,[329] as indicated by the identification of the Son of Man as Adam,[330] although this influence is no doubt mediated through the Ophite mythology. *Eugnostos* presents us with a philosophized version of the Ophite mythology. The descriptions of the Unbegotten Father have many similarities to the negative theology of the second century Christian apologist Aristides.[331] The emergence of the Self-Father through an act of introspection by the Unbegotten Father is reminiscent of the self-generation of Numenius' second god by self-contemplation. The major difference is that in *Eugnostos*, the Unbegotten Father is active rather than passive. Parrott proposes a connection with Eudorus, as *Eugnostos* represents a monad over a lower monad (= Immortal Man) and a dyad,[332] but for *Eugnostos*, monad and dyad are not a pair of opposites. If *Eugnostos* does not feature more explicit dependence on philosophers, it is presumably because the text explicitly rejects their conclusions (70.15).

[329]Parrott, "Eugnostos", 221
[330] Rasimus, "Ophite Gnosticism", 257.
[331] R. Van den Broek, "Eugnostos and Aristides on the Ineffable God" in *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (ed. R. Van den Broek; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 26ff.
[332] Parrott, "Gnosticism and Egyptian Religion", 81n25

iii. Platonizing Gnostics

Scholars have grouped together four Nag Hammadi texts into the "Platonizing Sethian treatises" text group: *Allogenes, Zostrianos, The Three Steles of Seth* and *Marsanes.*[333] This name is not intended to indicate that other texts do not exhibit signs of Platonic influence, but picks out a group of texts that seem to be working from a shared theology, which has significant affinities with Platonism. In his *Life of Plotinus,* Porphyry refers to certain "Gnostics", whose position Plotinus attacked at his seminars and in writing (16.9-11; cf. *Enneads* II.9).[334] He mentions that these Gnostics possess revelations ascribed to Zoroaster, Zostrianus and Allogenes (16.6-7).[335]

There is no consensus as to whether the texts of *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos,* known to us from Nag Hammadi, are the same as those known in Greek to Porphyry. The coincidence of names and the texts' affinity with Neoplatonic thought seems to indicate some relation,[336] though it seems likely that a number of texts bore the title *Allogenes* (cf. Epiphanius, Pan XL.2.2; XXXIX.5.1; cf. *Allogenes* XI,3:69,18-19).[337] The core disputed issue is whether the appearance of the Existence-Life-Mind triad within the texts requires a later date.[338] According to Sieber, this makes it "almost certain" that *Zostrianos* is the one mentioned by Porphyry.[339] Others take this as evidence of the reverse, considering the triad to be too late to appear in the texts known to Porphyry.[340] For some, this issue depends on whether the Existence-Life-Mind triad occurs in pre-Plotinian texts like the

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[333]J. H. Sieber, "Zostrianos (VIII,1)" in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (ed. J. M. Robinson; Leiden: Brill, 1984) 403; also see Turner, "Platonizing Sethian Treatises". Sometimes the Untitled Text of the Bruce Codex is included in this text group (A. Clark Wire, *„Allogenes",* in *Nag Hammadi Codices, XI, XII, XIII,* (eds. E. H. Pagels & C. W. Hedrick; Leiden: Brill, 1990) 181-4).

[334] Porphyry describes these Gnostics as being "of the schools of Adelphius and Aquilinus" (16.2), who are otherwise unknown to us. Edwards tentatively identifies Aquilinus with an individual of the same name mentioned by Eunapius as a former colleague of Plotinus (M. J. Edwards, "Aidōs in Plotinus: Enneads II.9.10", *CQ* 39.1 (1989) 231).

[335] The *Book of Zoroaster* is referred to in Ap. John II.19.10.

[336] A. Clark Wire, "Allogenes", in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (ed. J. M. Robinson; Leiden: Brill, 2000) 5:186; J. D. Turner, "Introduction" in *L'allogene* (eds. W-P. Funk, P-H Poirier & M. Scopello; Presses Universite Laval, 2004) 3; cf. Logan, *The Gnostics,* 47.

[337]Clark Wire, „Allogenes" in *Nag Hammadi Codices,* 174

[338] A number of other issues have been considered:

Majercik has argued that Porphyry identifies the Gnostics known to him as Christians but *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos* are not Christian texts (R. Majercik, "Porphyry and Gnosticism", *CQ* 55:1 (2005) 277-8). Whilst it is true that these texts do not contain Christian elements, this does not mean the authors did not regard themselves as Christians.

Edwards has argued that Porphyry records that Amelius wrote forty books refuting *Zostrianos* but he would not have done so for the Nag Hammadi *Zostrianos* that "falls short of twenty-five pages" (M. J. Edwards, "Plotinus and the Gnostics" (DPhil thes., Corpus Christi, Oxford, 1987), 136). However, *Zostrianos* is one of the longest works from Nag Hammadi so we may wonder which text would qualify for Amelius' exhaustive treatment.

Clark Wire has argued that similarities between the texts and what Plotinus records of the Gnostics in the *Enneads,* such as cultic elements, the superiority of the heavenly bodies and the terms *paroikesis, antitypoi,* and *metanoia*(Enn II.9.6), indicates these are the same texts (Clark Wire, "Allogenes" in *Nag Hammadi Codices,*187) but, as Edwards comments, "the vocabulary of the *Zostrianus* could not but coincide in some respects with that of the 'Gnostics' of Plotinus" (Edwards, "Plotinus and Gnostics", 138).

Tardieu has suggested that Plotinus cites Zost VIII.9.16-20 in Enn 2.9 [33].10.19-33 (see Turner, "Platonizing Sethian Treatises", 133n5) but the parallels are not compelling

[339] Sieber, "Zostrianos", 403.

[340]Majercik, "Porphyry and Gnosticism", 277-292; L. Abramowski, "Marius Victorinus, Porphyrius und die rōmischen Gnostiker", *ZNW* 74 (1983) 108-128.; cf. Edwards, "Plotinus and Gnostics", 142.

Chaldean Oracles[341], or the anonymous commentary on the *Parmenides.*[342]Rasimus has proposed that the building-blocks of the Existence-Life-Mind triad are to be found in the *Apocryphon of John,* and it was the Sethians "who brought the triad to Plotinus's attention".[343]

For our purposes, there seems sufficient reason to group the "Platonizing Sethian treatises" with the Gnostics known to Plotinus, even if the extant text group post-dates the work of Porphyry. I will consider the testimony of Plotinus, *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos* under the heading "Platonizing Gnostics". I will conclude that *Allogenes* and *Zostrianos* from Nag Hammadi are probably later redactions of the texts known to Porphyry.[344] I will also argue that the Neoplatonic Existence-Life-Mind triad has been written over the (pre-Plotinian) Gnostic concept of the Triple-Powered One, which may itself have been influential on the origins of that triad.[345]

Gnostics according to Plotinus

Enneads II.9 is the final part of a long treatise summarising Plotinus' philosophical position (cf. III.8, V.8 and V.5). In this final part, Plotinus turns his attention to a specific attack on the Gnostics. It is a testament to the cultural and intellectual success of Gnosticism that Plotinus and his followers Amelius and Porphyry feel compelled to engage with the Gnostics. As Layton writes, "the resemblance became too close for comfort, and Platonists felt obliged to refute the Gnostics and dissociate themselves from Gnostic philosophy".[346] The extent of this Gnostic penetration into the philosophical schools may be indicated by the fact that Plotinus considers some of them "friends" and "acquaintances" (II.9.10).[347]

We need not undertake to summarise all that Plotinus writes about these Gnostics and their beliefs. It is sufficient to draw out what Plotinus identifies as the major features of their position. This is not a straightforward task as Plotinus acknowledges his own lack of clarity regarding their position (cf. II.9.10), and he frequently refers to hypothetical responses, which may be straw-men. "Because Plotinus chooses to accentuate the foolishness of these doctrines, it is hard to determine whether they were central to his opponents or peripheral in their texts".[348] Also, Plotinus will often use his own terminology to summarise their position; this may not be indicative of Gnostic terminology or even be an adequate synonym. With these cautions in mind we proceed.

Regarding the Gnostic system, Plotinus writes "they conceived one mind passively including within itself all that has being, another mind, a distinct existence, having vision, and a third planning the universe – though often they substitute Soul for this

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[341] Turner thinks the triad does occur in the *Chaldean Oracles* (Turner, "Introduction" in *L'allogene,* 59n38, 137); Clark Wire disagrees (Clark Wire, "Allogenes" in *Nag Hammadi Codices*, 189)

[342] This is ascribed to Porphyry by Hadot and Zambon whereas Linguiti and Bechtle consider it to be pre-Plotinian (Turner, "Platonizing Sethian Treatises", 146; Majercik, "Porphyry and Gnosticism", 278).

[343]Rasimus, "Porphyry and Gnostics", 101-3, 107

[344] Burns, whilst he considers *Zostrianos* to be the same text known to Porphyry, argues that the extant version of *Allogenes* is a "post-Plotinian redaction" (D. Burns, "Apophatic Strategies in *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3)", *HTR* 103:2 (2010) 165-6).

[345] T. Rasimus, "Stoic Ingredients in the Neoplatonic *Being-Life-Mind* Triad: An Original Second-Century Gnostic Innovation?" in *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (eds. T. Rasimus, T. Engberg-Pedersen & I. Dunderberg; Baker Academic, 2010) 257-270

[346]Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 182.

[347] Though see Edwards, "Aidōs in Plotinus", 230

[348] Clark Wire, "Allogenes" in *Nag Hammadi Codices*,187

planning mind as the creating principle – and they think that this third being is the Creator according to Plato" (II.9.6). This might suggest a relatively simple system of three minds – a passive mind, a visionary mind, and planning/demiurgic mind – which Plotinus can contrast with his triad (One-Intellect-Soul). However, this would be misleading, because Plotinus also complains about the Gnostics' unnecessary multiplication of principles and intermediaries, asserting that his own triad is both necessary and sufficient (II.9.1). Nevertheless, the testimony from Plotinus may indicate that the Gnostics gave some special significance to these three minds. Since the passive mind is likely to be the highest principle, and given that Plotinus associates Soul in some way with Sophia (II.9.10), we might speculate that this triad of minds should be identified as Invisible Spirit, Mother and Sophia (see below).

Plotinus defends the priority of the One and rejects the idea that any implications can be drawn out from descriptions of the One (II.9.1). Plotinus seems to be accusing the Gnostics of arguing for ontological conclusions on the basis of terminology. It is not clear what additional ontological commitments they were arguing for. It may be that the Gnostics were arguing for a principle higher than the One. Alternatively, they may be arguing that Plotinus' conception of the One is insufficient; Porphyry testifies that the Gnostics thought that Plato "failed to penetrate into the depth of Intellectual Being" (VP 16). The Gnostics considered the Invisible Spirit to be the perfect mind (Zost. 29.17-18), so presumably they would have clashed with Plotinus, who did not consider the One to be a mind.

Plotinus rejects the idea that the Intellect can be divided or multiplied in any way. Actuality cannot be divided from potentiality as though it were a separate thing; nor consciousness from self-consciousness. This might refer to the division of the Mother into the Triple-Powered One; it is possible that potentiality, consciousness and self-consciousness correspond to the three aeons of the Triple-Powered One (see below).[349] Plotinus also rejects the idea that there is a distinct reason-principle between the Intellect and the Soul (II.9.1).

Plotinus' major disagreement with the Gnostics is regarding the origins of the world. He rejects the idea of the fall of the Soul and its creation of the world. He is unclear whether the Soul and Sophia are regarded as the same thing, but knows that Sophia is the mother of the Demiurge (II.9.10). He rejects as absurd the temporality of the fall and queries the Soul's motivation for creating (II.9.4). He scoffs at the idea that the higher world is the paradigm (λόγος) of this world; why would one want to ascend to this flawed paradigm? (II.9.5). Matter must either be separate from the divine beings, in which case the divine beings are not everywhere; or else matter must "receive the divine light" (II.9.3). It was natural for a Platonist to read Sophia as "the soul who leaves her supercelestial orbit in the Phaedrus" (Enn II.9.4; *Phaedr.* 246C)[350], but it is unclear to what extent the Gnostics made the identification.[351] In Valentinian ontology, at least, Sophia was spiritual, not

[349] Plotinus raises one possible response, saying "if we are answered that the distinction is merely a process of our thought ..." It might indicate that the Gnostics were know conceiving of aeons conceptually, rather than ontologically. In another telling phrase he writes, "if all comes to states of the Soul ... there is nothing here but a jargon".

[350] M. Edwards, "Pauline Platonism: The Myth of Valentinus", *Studia Patristica* 35 (2001) 213.

[351] Turner argues that the Gnostics equate Sophia with the World Soul by connecting Sophia (Gnostic) with Sophia (Philo), Isis (Plutarch) and Hecate (*Chaldean Oracles*). I am not convinced these connections are as suggestive as Turner believes (see Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 589-596).

psychical. In the Ophite diagram the World Soul was equated with Leviathan (= Ialdabaoth?).

Zostrianos

Summary

Zostrianos is one of the longest texts of the Nag Hammadi library but almost every page of the manuscript is damaged.[352] This does not assist us in understanding an already incoherent text. The text is a "heavenly journey apocalypse".[353] Zostrianos finds within himself "the infinite part" (1.15-16) by dismissing his material nature (1.16-18). Questioning the nature of existence and the higher intellectual realm (2.25-32), he prays to the god of his forefathers for understanding (3.14-19). He becomes depressed and is contemplating suicide (3.23-28) when an angel appears to him and rebukes him: "as if you were ignorant of the great eternals" (3.32). Zostrianos then ascends with the angel to learn of the eternals (4.20-23).

As Zostrianos ascends, he passes from the world (= "airy-earth") and through the various levels of the immortal realm. At the first level is the "copies of aeons" (5.19), which are the "cosmic model" for the world (8.11-12; cf. 129.24-25); the world itself was not produced directly from this model, but from "a reflection of a reflection" (10.4). The next level is "Exile" (5.24) and the next "Repentance" (5.27), presumably the levels of Sophia's exile from the immortal realm and her place of rest after her repentance (cf. 10.7-9). As he continues to ascend he passes through many other levels and receives baptisms.

The highest principle is the Invisible Spirit, described as "one everywhere, being undivided" (87.17-18). Below is the Mother, identified as "a thought of the perfect mind" (29.17-18) and called "Barbelo"; the author gives the supposed etymology of the name, "because (of her being) thought" (83.8-10). She is "a good (product)" of the Invisible Spirit (83.23) and came into being through the Triple-Powered One. Her generation is an act of contemplation of the Invisible Spirit: "she who has known him has known herself" (87.15-16). Unlike the Invisible Spirit, she is active; "she [is] his activity and life and divinity" (86.18).

The Triple-Powered One is sometimes equated with the Invisible Spirit (cf. 118.10-12), but also as his "First Thought" (20.17) and therefore with Barbelo. The three powers are Kalyptos, described as "unborn" (2:22-23) and "self-begotten" (20.5); Protophanes, described as "the great male invisible mind" (18.5; cf. 13:3-4); and Autogenes, described as "the perfect child" (13.4-5). These three proceed, each one from the former: Kalyptos is "a cause of the Protophanes" (20.8-9) and is thus "an origin of the Autogenes" (20.6-7). These three are the "single origin [of] the Barbelo aeon" (14.5-6).

Autogenes is "chief archon" of four aeons (19.7-10), which are also described as four lights (29.1-15). Here we see a remnant of Barbeloite mythology, with the four luminaries associated with Autogenes. As in the *Apocryphon of John*, these four aeons are associated with Adamas (= Geradamas, 6.23), Seth (6.25) and the sons of Seth (7.7-8), and Autogenes produces the perfect man (= Geradamas; 6.24-25).

[352] Sieber, "Zostrianos", 402
[353] Sieber, "Zostrianos", 402

The Triple-Powered One is co-ordinate with another triad: Autogenes with Life; Protophanes with Blessedness; and Kalyptos with Existence (15.4-12). Though the text is very fragmentary, it is possible to diagnose the general theme for this triad: the Invisible Spirit exists in these three aspects and within this continuous emanation whilst not existing in any one place (66-67). Through this emanation comes Barbelo as a reflection (76.25); an introspection of the Invisible Spirit, and so she becomes divided from the Invisible Spirit (77.12) and becomes a separate being. Yet whilst this triad might be seen as procession of aspects or stages, it is also described as being co-existent and co-ordinate: "it is at one time that the three stand, at one time they move" (74.15-16). The Tripled-Powered One is "the One" and "is three" (118.15-16).

Discussion

The mythology of this text is Barbeloite in origin, retaining many elements common to the *Apocryphon of John*. However, whilst the origins of the material world through the fall of Sophia (9.18) and its malevolent rulers (4.26-30) are essentially the same, the number and pattern of aeons is profoundly different. Now we simply have the Invisible Spirit and Barbelo, with the intermediate Triple-Powered One. Autogenes takes on a double-role as both the third power and as the father of the ideal man. He retains a role independent of Barbelo as the Child, in the Gnostic Father-Mother-Child triad. However, the more significant triad is the co-existent and co-ordinate Life-Blessedness-Existence triad (see below), that being both three and one may be correctly called a trinity.

Allogenes

Summary

Allogenes is ostensibly the divine revelations received by Allogenes ("stranger") and recorded for his son Messos. The text can be split into two sections; the five revelations of Youel to Allogenes and the ascent of Allogenes. Separate sources for these two parts have been supposed, though the text is presented as a single treatise.[354] What is revealed to Allogenes concerns the Invisible One and Barbelo and mediating between these, three aeons (or rather, the Triple-Powered One).

In the descriptions of the Invisible One, the negative theology reaches new paradoxical heights. He is both "perfect" (47.14) and "[greater] than perfect" (47.15); both "blessed" (47.16) and prior to blessedness (47.28-32); without either "Existence or Non-Existence" (61.31-38). He is "nonsubstantial substance" (47.34) and "immaterial [material]" (48.22); he "moved motionlessly" (53.10).

Barbelo "knows" the Invisible One (45.28-30). She is a "Triple-Male" (45.37), or perhaps bears the Triple-Male Child [= Savior] inasmuch as she bears Autogenes (46.10-11; cf. 51.33-34). Barbelo is equated with First Thought (53.27-28) and has "types and forms of those who truly exists" (51.14-15). In what is perhaps a remnant of earlier mythologies, Barbelo is revealed by her luminaries (59.5-6), though these are not described.

The most intriguing character in the text is the Triple-Powered One. He is sometimes equated with the Invisible One (47.9-10) but also with the First Thought of the Invisible One (64.34-35) and so with Barbelo. The Triple-Powered One is, perhaps, best thought

[354] A. Clark Wire, J. D. Turner & O. S. Wintermute, "Allogenes (XI,3)" in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (ed. J. M. Robinson; Leiden: Brill, 1984) 490.

of as the transition of First Thought emanating from the Invisible One and becoming Barbelo; "when [he was stilled, he was extended] and [when he was extended], he became [complete] ... and he [came to be in an] Aeon who knows [that] she knows That One", i.e. Barbelo (45.21-30). This transition or extension has three stages (or aeons). The first is Kalyptos ("concealed"), the image of the Invisible One. Kalyptos bears within himself Protophanes ("first manifest") "like an image" (51.20-21). Protophanes bears Autogenes ("self-originate") "like an image" (51.26-27). These three are associated with certain activity: Kalyptos with seeing (46.30-31); Protophanes with pondering (46.23-25). One might envisage the Triple-Powered One as the hypostasized process by which Barbelo is emanated by the self-contemplation of the Invisible One, though this is not explicitly stated. Kalyptos is an image of the Invisible One in First Thought, which is seen; Protophanes is a noetic-manifestation of the Invisible One in the contemplation of the First Thought; Autogenes is a substantiation of that thought in Barbelo, a self-originate existence.

These three aeons are coordinated with three powers: Existence (Kalyptos), Vitality (Protophanes) and Blessedness (Autogenes). "And the three are one, although individually they are three" (49.36-37).

Autogenes bears the Triple-Male Child (51.33-34), who is described as "the Savior" (58.13). It is not clear what this salvation involves, although it may be part of the activity ascribed to Autogenes: "continuing to rectify the failures from nature" (51.30-32)

Discussion

Like *Zostrianos*, *Allogenes* shares in the Barbeloite Gnostic tradition, retaining some of its mythological elements;[355] "apparently, for the author of *Allogenes,* the genre, idiom, and colour of Barbeloite Sethianism were too precious to concede".[356] Yet the author's preeminent concern is with utilising philosophical terminology and techniques to bolster his Gnostic cosmology. If *Allogenes* is to be dated after *Zostrianos,* following Burns, then one can trace the development between the two texts.

The author of *Allogenes* delights in negative theology, particularly in utilizing Platonic techniques for expressing it; "the Unknowable is neither this, nor that, but is greater".[357] The author is also keen on paradox – one might say blatant contradictions. The clumsy enthusiasm for negative theology does not seem inspired by a care for exactitude, but perhaps almost a desire to outdo the philosophers. The desired impact is to elevate the Invisible One above all attributes; to identify the most superior thing.

Such a project requires some modification to the proceeding scheme. The Triple Powered One is no longer identified with the Invisible One, who is described as being "without Mind or Life or Existence" (61.36-38). Rather the Triple Powered One is, seemingly, equated with Barbelo as an emanation of First Thought. This raises the question of how the Invisible One thinks, given that he is without mind and without need of mind (62.19).[358] Brankaer proposes that Barbelo is the Mind of the Invisible One (cf.

[355] Clark Wire, "Allogenes" in *Nag Hammadi Library*, 490
[356]Burns, "Apophatic Strategies", 179.
[357]Burns, "Apophatic Strategies", 168
[358]Cf. J. Brankaer, "The concept of *nous* in the 'Sethian Platonizing Treatises' of Nag Hammadi", *ZAC* 12 (2008) 67-8.

51.17-21),[359] though it may be unhelpful to force the comparison between Barbelo and Plotinus' Second Hypostasis. The author himself would probably have answered with a paradox; the Invisible One is self-comprehending (63.29) and knowledge of the Invisible One is unknowable knowledge (64.11), so presumably the Invisible One can think without a mind. Such inexactitude does not seem to have troubled the author.

Existence-Life-Mind Triad

Turner writes that "the Triple Powered One is the most distinctive metaphysical innovation of the Platonizing Sethian treatises".[360] As we have seen, *Zostrianos* identified the Triple Powered One with the Invisible Spirit. *Allogenes*, (perhaps a later work) and *Marsanes* separate the Triple Powered One as a sort of transition from the Invisible One to Barbelo, identified with each but separate from both – as Turner describes it, "quasi-hypostatic''.[361] (In *Three Steles of Seth*, the Triple Powered One seems located within Barbelo). The names of the three powers – Kalyptos, Protophanes, Autogenes – describe a process by which Barbelo comes into being as a procession from the Invisible One: originally hidden with the Invisible One, then manifest, then substantiated. We saw that these three are associated with certain activities (seeing, pondering), which describe the process of introspection by which Barbelo comes into being.

Turner associates the powers with three ontological levels: contemplated (= Kalyptos); contemplates (= Protophanes); and discursive (= Autogenes) (cf. Tim 39e). Further, Turner involves the three powers in the process of creation: Kalyptos contains paradigmatic ideas, Protophanes contains contemplated ideas with contemplating minds and Autogenes is demiurgic mind (cf. Plotinian Soul).[362] Though there are undoubtedly parallels with Plotinus, there is a danger that Turner's eisegesis of Gnostic texts credits them with a level of sophistication not exhibited in their terminology, structure or clarity. The Triple Powered One does not parallel Plotinus' three hypostases, nor is Barbelo a simple mirror to the second hypostasis. Autogenes does serve a demiurgic function, particularly in *Zostrainos,* but this is in no small measure due to its Barbeloite predecessors.

It is questionable to what extent the Neoplatonic intelligible triad fits within the Gnostic context. Turner attempts to account for the terms in the procession from the One to Barbelo; Existence as the One, Vitality as the intermediary stage, and Mentality, in contemplation of the One, as Barbelo.[363] This reconstruction is nowhere explicitly revealed in any of the texts. The One is not Existence, although he may confer Being (48.16). Vitality or Life is not especially characteristic of Protophanes; whereas Mind certainly is. If anything, the intelligible triad is an imposition on the scheme, conferring three terms on the three powers that bear little semblance to their function. The intelligible triad does not feel like natural development of the Triple-Powered One, but rather a foreign element superimposed upon it. The further "innovative step" of *Allogenes* of arranging the three powers into three horizontal triads, where "each term

[359] Brankaer, "Concept of *nous*", 59-61; cf. Turner, "Platonizing Sethian Treatises", 142
[360] Turner, "Platonizing Sethian Treatises", 145
[361] Turner, "Platonizing Sethian Treatises", 145
[362] Turner, "Platonizing Sethian Treatises", 143
[363] Turner, "Platonizing Sethian Treatises", 144

cyclically predominates and includes the other two",[364] serves no purpose within the scheme and is clumsily expressed – again, this feels like the imposition of a foreign element.

Whilst the Triple-Powered One may be a Gnostic innovation, albeit influenced by contemporary Platonic ideas, the intelligible triad is not. The adoption of this triad is likely to come from engagement with Plotinus and later Neoplatonists. Unless some evidence can be produced that the intelligible triad is pre-Plotinian (e.g. anonymous commentary on Parmenides) then these Platonizing Gnostic texts in their current form, especially *Allogenes,* need to be dated later than Plotinus. However, reference to texts of the same name by Porphyry make it is likely that there were earlier recessions of the same texts, which may be reasonably dated to the late second century or early third century. It may be assumed that these earlier recessions included some earlier iteration of the Triple-Powered One. If this is the case, then we can reconstruct the development of the Gnostic mythology through the second century; from the "Barbeloite" triad (Father-Mother-Son) to the "Platonizing" triad (Invisible Spirit-Mother-Autogenes), with the Triple-Powered One as a mediatory triad between Invisible Spirit and Mother. The origins of the Triple-Powered One may be traced to descriptions of Barbelo as "thrice-powerful" and "thrice-male" in the *Apocryphon of John,* in conjunction with the desire to explore the emanation of Barbelo as thought.

Of the three Gnostic triads discussed, it is the Tripled-Powered One that can correctly be called a trinity. The Tripled-Powered One is one entity - sometimes identified as the Invisible One, sometimes as Barbelo and sometimes as neither – but it is also three persons. Inasmuch as the three persons are transitional states this trinity may be considered modalistic; however the figure of Autogenes illustrates how each person is instantiated in his own right. As a timeless transition, these three are also co-eternal. Yet whilst being schematically similar to the Christian Trinity, descriptively and functionally there is little connection. The only substantive comparison is Autogenes (as saviour) and Jesus. It is also difficult to see how Christian writers could have mapped their ontology on to this Gnostic scheme, given the absence of shared concepts to hook onto.

c. The Heresiarchs

i. Simonians

Simon Magus

Simon Magus is accredited by the heresiologists as being the first Gnostic, but although the system that the so-called "Simonians" would ultimately develop has many parallels with Gnosticism, it is doubtful how much of this originated with Simon. Justin claims that Simon was worshipped as the first god and that he went about with a prostitute named Helen, who was identified as his first thought (Apol 1.26). According to *Acts,* Simon had a significant following in Samara and was described there as "the power of God, which is called Great" (Acts 8:9-11). Luke shows no knowledge of Helen[365] or the Simonians, so it may be that "the 'Simonian system' came into being only after the death

[364] Turner, "Platonizing Sethian Treatises", 145

[365] Lüdemann raises the possibility that Luke alludes to Helen as η επινοια της καρδιας in Acts 8:22, but this seems doubtful (G. Lüdemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 96-8).

of Simon".[366] Justin claims that the Romans had erected a statue to Simon on the river Tiber with the inscription: SIMONI DEO SANCTO. It is widely held that this was, in fact, a statue of Sabine god, bearing the inscription SEMONI SANCO DEO, a piece of which has been recovered. The significant question is whether the confusion originates from Justin or his sources.[367] Though we cannot be certain, the parallels between Simon and Helen with Zeus and Athene on the one hand (cf. AH 1.23.4),[368] and the paternal link with Semo Sancus to Jupiter on the other may explain why the Simonians would adopt such a statue as their own. If this is the case then the story of Simon coming to Rome, and much else associated with him, was an invention of these later Simonians.

According to Clement of Alexandria and the Pseudo-Clementines, Simon was identified by his followers as "the Standing One" (*Stromata* 2.11.52; *Recognitions* 2.7.1). This title might imply the standing of the saviour-figure before God (cf. Acts 7:55-56).[369]

In *The Myth of God Incarnate,* Michael Goulder theorized that Simon Magus claimed to be incarnate Glory, a hypostasis of a supposed Samaritan binity and, further, was the source of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation.[370] However, even in second century Simonianism, Simon is not incarnated but transfigured (AH 1.23.3). According to this mythology as recounted by Irenaeus, the principle power is the Father over all, from whom came forth Ennoia, mother of all, who descended to the lower regions and generated the angels. These angels created the world but being jealous of the Father, detained Ennoia and imprisoned her in a human body. The Father descended to the world in human form to first save Ennoia and then reveal himself to all mankind. The world was to be dissolved and some of his followers would be saved from the angels (AH 1.23.1-4). Menander, described as a "disciple of Simon" by Justin (1 Apol 26), seems to have developed this mythology by positing himself as the saviour sent to save his followers from the angels by teaching them magic (AH 1.23.5). By separating the saviour-figure from the primary power, he has, consciously or not, created a divine triad (God-Ennoia-Saviour). This parallels some versions of the Barbeloite familial triad, where the Child as a soterological function.

A divine triad is ascribed to Simon by Irenaeus, who claims that Simon taught that he had appeared in all three guises of the Trinity. Irenaeus writes, "he taught that it was himself who appeared among the Jews as the Son, but descended in Samaria as the Father, while he came to other nations in the character of the Holy Spirit" (AH 1.23.1). This statement has been accepted rather uncritically as though it indicated that Simon, or the Simonians, adopted the Christian Trinity and adjusted it for his or their own purposes.[371] It seems more probable that the terms Father, Son and Spirit are Irenaeus'

[366] Markschies, *Gnosis*, 75.
[367] C. Markschies, *Gnosis: An Introduction* (London: Continuum, 2003) 74.
[368] R. Roukema, *Gnosis and Faith in Early Christianity* (Trinity Press, 1999), 20; Markschies, *Gnosis*, 74
[369] Goulder attempts to explain this title by reference to the Samaritan *Marqah,* which mentions the Glory (of God) standing before Moses. Goulder interprets the Glory as a hypostasis of God, of which Simon claims to be the incarnation (M. Goulder, "The Two Roots of the Christian Myth" in *The Myth of God Incarnate* (ed. J. Hick; London: SCM Press, 1977) 73).
[370] Goulder, "Two Roots", 64-86. Those NT texts he diagnosed as showing Samaritan influence he has more recently identified as Jewish Christian (See M. Goulder, *A Tale of Two Missions* (London: SCM Press, 1994)).
[371]Roukema, *Gnosis and Faith,* 20; G. Filoramo, *History of Gnosticism* (Oxford: Wiley, 1993)149; Markschies, *Gnosis*, 75.

categories for describing how the Simonians identified Simon with the First God (1 Apol 26); with Jesus (AH 1.23.3), and with the power of God (Acts 8:10).

The Great Declaration

Hippolytus, writing at the beginning of the third century, includes in his treatment on the Simonians, in addition to material taken *verbatim* from Irenaeus, material that is based upon a work he calls *The Great Declaration.* We may assume that all the non-Irenaeian material is from this single source (he names no other). This treatise, though containing familiar motifs, also differs dramatically from the mythology described above. We can detect both Gnostic and philosophic influences in its concepts.

The originating principle of the universe is fire (citing Deut 4:24). As in Heraclitus, all things are indefinite because they are composed of fire. Therefore, there must be a perfect intellect that infinitely comprehends all things; presumably to secure the stability of the universe (*Ref.* VI.6). This intellect is called the "unbegotten indefinite power", and he produced the universe (*Ref.* VI.7). From the Unbegotten Power comes forth the Begotten Power. Hippolytus gives two descriptions of his generation. According to one, the Unbegotten Power brings forth six paired roots (Nous-Epinoia, Voice-Name, Ratiocination-Reflection); the Begotten Power exists when these roots form an image and ceases to exist when they do not (*Ref.* VI.7). According to the second, the Unbegotten Power emits two offshoots (Nous and Epinoia), who through conjugal union bring forth the Standing One, who is identified as the Unbegotten Power and as the Begotten Power: "he himself, bringing forward himself by means of himself, manifested unto himself his own peculiar intelligence" (*Ref.* VI.13). The Begotten Power is divided into three phases ("who stood, stands and will stand"; *Ref.* VI.12): it stood in the Unbegotten Power, it stands in begotten likeness, and it will stand next to the Unbegotten Power. The Begotten Power is described on the one hand as being an image of the Unbegotten Power; and on the other as being "one and the same" as the Unbegotten Power, without deficiency (*Ref.* VI.7).

The fire has a twofold nature, secret and manifest, and man is also formed twofold; whoever is not fashioned according to the image of God will be destroyed, but those who are will infinitely endure (*Ref.* VI.9). The image of God is, presumably, the Begotten Power, but is here identified as the Holy Spirit. This image of the Unbegotten Power is divided and seeded into all mankind. In this seed resides potentially the image of the Unbegotten Power and through "proper instruction", this seed can bear fruit "equal and similar to the unbegotten and indefinite power" (*Ref.* VI.11). It is the Logos that brings about this change (*Ref.* VI.10), and this Logos is identified as the Begotten Power (*Ref.* VI.8).

We can, perhaps, trace the evolution of the Simonian mythology. The idea of Simon being the First God has now developed into the idea of the image of the Unbegotten Power potentially residing in all of us. The Standing One has evolved into the three phases of the emanation of the Begotten Power; there are clear parallels with the Triple-Powered One of the "Platonizing" Gnostics. There are also strong Neopythagorean undertones; the Unbegotten Power "being unity" and then passing into a "state of duality". The Simonian mythology has developed into a monistic system and Ennoia is no longer a key character. The concept of the descent of Ennoia and her subsequent salvation may, perhaps, still be seen in the descent of the seed and its fruition through proper instruction.

"stood in Unbegotten"	"stood as image of Unbegotten"	"stood next to Unbegotten"
Kalyptos (concealed)	Protophranes (first manifest)	Autogenes (self-originate)

Some of these developments can be explained by innovations within the Simonian movement (if there was such as thing), but many are best explained by an engagement with Gnosticism and (perhaps indirectly) Platonism. There are many similarities between the Gnostic systems and *The Great Declaration,* including: androgynous powers, a series of hypostasis and a divine spark saved by revelation. It is based upon these similarities that Hippolytus asserts that Valentinus was influenced by the Simonians (*Ref.* VI. 15). However, it seems more probable that *The Great Delcaration* postdates Valentinus. There also seems little to recommend the idea that Simon himself derived his ideas from a pre-existing Gnostic system.[372] Rather, the development of the Simonian myth seems to parallel the development of Gnosticism and other related systems. The cross-pollination of ideas seems probable, though the exact nature of this exchange is unknown.

It is also significant that the Simonian mythology contains something like the concept of *spermatic logos* (cf. Justin). The author clearly regards himself as belonging to the Christian tradition, quoting by OT and NT as authoritative (Is 40:8 – *Ref.* VI.5; 1 Cor 11:32 – *Ref.* VI.9), and yet he makes no mention of Jesus. It is difficult to say whether the identification of the Logos with the Standing One is a result of Christian influence. If so, the author was seemingly influenced by a Christian tradition that identified the Logos and the Holy Spirit (cf. Justin).

ii. Basilides

Basilides is described by Irenaeus as arising amongst the Simonians (AH 1.24.1). There are certainly some similarities between the various Simonian systems and the followers of Basilides. However, we know little about his life.[373] We have two accounts of Basilidean mythology; one from Irenaeus and the other from Hippolytus. Though there have been attempts to reconcile the two accounts, they seem to be inconsistent. Since Hippolytus had read Irenaeus, his account must come from a separate source presumably not known to Irenaeus. Whilst Irenaeus' account shows similarities with his account of Saturnius' mythology, Hippolytus' account seems to reveal Gnostic influences. Assuming both are Basilidean, it seems likely that Hippolytus' account is later.

According to Irenaeus, the Basilides believed in an unborn father, who is unknown and without name. From the unknown father proceeded Nous (= Christ). Logos proceeded from Nous, Phronesis from Logos, Sophia from Phronesis and Dynamis from Sophia. From Dynamis proceeded the powers, principalities and angels (cf. Rom 8:38) that made the first heaven (cf. Rev 21:1; cf. 2 Cor 12:2). Then there were further emanations that made the second heaven, and so on until 365 heavens had been made (AH 1.24.3).

[372] *Pace* T. Adamik, "The Image of Simon Magus in the Christian Tradition" in *Simon Magus in Patristic, Medieval and Early Modern Traditions* (ed. A. Ferreiro; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 52-64.
[373] See Irenaeus, AH 1.24.5-6; Clement, *Stromata* II.20; IV.12; Eusebius, HE 4.7.6-7.

Basilidean Mythology, according to Hipploytus

According to Hippolytus, Basilideans believed in a primary power they call the "non-existent God". This seems an extreme form of negative theology, which seems to go beyond even Plotinus, though without his elegance or clarity of thought. Nothing that is nameable or sensible or cognisable can be ascribed to this God, so he is described as "non-ineffable" (because "ineffable" is a name) and even "non-existent" (because he cannot be described as being; *Ref.* VII.8-9). The non-existent God "inconceivably, insensibly, indeterminately, involuntarily, impassively, (and) unactuated by desire, willed to create a world" (*Ref.* VII.9). The non-existent God creates the seed of the world from nothing. Within this Seed is the germ of all things, and it is identified as the three Sonships. This threefold Sonship is "in every respect of the same substance with the non-existent God" (*Ref.* VII.10). The first Sonship is pure; it bursts forth and ascends upwards, attaining to the non-existent. The second Sonship is unable to ascend of itself and requires the Holy Spirit as a wing. The Holy Spirit is not able to enter the non-existent and is left outside, retaining "a savour of Sonship". The Holy Spirit acts as a firmament dividing the mundane from the super-mundane. The third Sonship remains within the germ of the world and confers benefits to it (*Ref.* VII.10). The third Sonship is to remain until the souls have been completed (*Ref.* VII.13).

The Great Archon (= Arrhetus) comes out of the Seed; he is more ineffable than other ineffable entities (but still lower than the non-existent God). He ascends to the firmament and assuming that he has reached the highest point, considers himself Lord and Demiurge. He generates a Son, who coming from the third Sonship, is far superior to the Great Archon. He sits at the right hand of the Great Archon and advises him on the creation of the world. This level of the heavens is called the Ogdoad (*Ref.* VII.11). There is also a second Archon (= Rhetus), who is king of our corner of the universe. He similarly generates a son who sits at his right hand side. His throne is in the Hebdomad (*Ref.* VII.12). The Great Archon inspired the prophets (*Ref.* VII.13), but it is Rhetus who spoke to Moses (*Ref.* VII.12).

There are some parallels with the account given by Irenaeus (e.g. the unknown father, the 365 powers) but this myth is in a more developed form. The Great Archon and the Second Archon have respectively taken the roles of the powers that made the world and of the "God of the Jews". This mythology is also more positive about creation; the Great Archon is more ignorant than evil and the world is at least created according to the germ of the non-existent God. The role of the Son is now more clearly defined. Whereas Nous/Christ was the adversary of the God of the Jews, the Sonship is a threefold divine power, which emanates from God and attempts to return to God. The fate of human souls is linked the fate of the third Sonship, who remains below as a completer of souls and thus provides a way for all souls to enter into the non-existent.

There are distinct similarities between the three Sonships and the Ophite male triad, and the shared feature of the Holy Spirit as boundary for the super-heavenly realm. However there is no fallen Sophia, only the seed of the world. The second influence here is Platonism, as manifested in the negative theology, the division between the mundane and super-mundane and perhaps even in the title "archon" (cf. Harpocration), but there is no indication of the Platonic triad.

iii. Valentinians

Valentinus (c.140-155)[374]

Valentinus is one of the most well-known heresiarchs and if we may judge by the amount written against his following, the Valentinians were one of the most significant heterodox Christian movements of the second century. Yet, as with many others, little of his writings and opinions have survived. According to Irenaeus, Valentinus "adopted the principles of the heresy called 'Gnostic'" (AH 1.11.1) – it is not clear whether Irenaeus has this on reliable testimony or is simply conjecturing from the similarity of the two schemes; the latter seems more probable.

The extant fragments of Valentinus attest to a wide variety of writings including epistles, hymns and possibly even a gospel. From these fragments alone we are able to reconstruct somewhat of Valentinus' views. As with Plato's doctrine of the Forms, Valentinus held that the world was a representation of the Living Realm. Valentinus, however, seems somewhat kinder to the world than Plato, saying that though the world is imperfect, God's invisible attributes lend it credence (fr.D). Representation is not, as Plato saw it, a debasement of truth but rather it is the similarity between the original and the image that makes the image of greater worth than its construction alone merits. Adam, inasmuch as he represented the "pre-existent human being", was a thing of awe for the angels (fr.C). This being said, Valentinus identifies the present creation as corruption which will ultimately be destroyed (fr.F). The material world and the living realm are not polarised; corruption seems to be understood as extremity from God. In his hymn *Summer Harvest* Valentinus explains how all things are hung, in a sort of chain, from spirit (or the Spirit?); flesh from soul, soul from air, air from upper atmosphere. It seems that the angels formed human beings but some higher power (God?) deposited a "seed of higher essence" into them. The angels are in awe of man, and attempt to conceal their creation (from God?) (fr.C). It is presumably, this "seed" that is immortal and preserved through the annihilation of the world (fr.F; cf. Saturninus).

Hippolytus records that Valentinus told the tale that upon seeing a newborn babe he questioned it and found it was the Logos (fr.A). This strange tale might indicate that Valentinus himself held a doctrine of aeons, including the embodiment/incarnation of those aeons in human forms, though it is difficult to be sure. In quoting the words of Jesus, "one there is who is good" (cf. Mark 10:18), he seems to affirm a belief in one God whom he identifies as God and Father (fr.H). The son is manifested as God's "free act of speaking" (fr.H; cf. fr.C). Depending on translation, Valentinus may have been included in Clement's testimony that the Valentinians delighted in marriage as mirroring the divine emanations above (*Strom.* III.1.1).[375]

Based upon these testimonies, we would conclude that Valentinus posited a system with one God, the son who manifests him (= Logos) and a number of other aeons or powers. There is no triad apparent in these fragments. Marcellus of Ancyra ascribes to

[374]The biographical testimonies about Valentinus vary in their reliability. He is likely have been born in Egypt (*Medicine Chest* II.31.2.1f). He came to Rome c.140 and taught there for 15 years (AH 3.4.3). According to Epiphanius, Valentinus went to Cyprus to continue teaching, and presumably remained there till his death (c.160?).Fragments for Valentinus are collated in Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 231.

[375] G. Quispel, "The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic", *Vigiliae Chrstianae* 50.4 (1996) 334f. Quispel also identifies a testimony in Didymus the Blind and in Cyril, which he believes is based on an otherwise unknown source, which says Valentinus taught that Sophia was the last of the thirty aeons (337).

Valentinus the origins of the doctrine of the Trinity, saying he "was the first to devise the notion of three subsistent entities, in a work that he entitled *On the Three Natures*" (fr.B). Given that Marcellus would have polemic reasons for ascribing the doctrine of the Trinity to an infamous heretic, we can be sceptical about this testimony. According to Irenaeus, the Valentinians believed in three kinds of existence: material, animal and spiritual (AH 1.5.1). We may see the beginnings of this doctrine in the fragments of Valentinus. After all, Jesus does not seem to have been understood docetically, but as having a special sort of body that is free from corruption (fr.E). This may be because he had an animal nature but not a material nature (cf. AH 1.6.1). Therefore it is conceivable that Valentinus did write a work entitled *On the Three Natures*, which Marcellus mistook for a work on the Trinity without knowing its contents.

The Gospel of Truth[376]

Irenaeus attests that the Valentinians used a gospel in addition to the canonical four entitled the *Gospel of Truth* (AH 3.11.9; cf. Pseudo-Tertullian). This has generally been identified with the work from Nag Hammadi, which opens with the words "the gospel of truth ..." (I.16.31). Based upon the similarities with the fragments of Valentinus, a number of scholars have proposed that Valentinus himself was the author.[377] The gospel quotes the NT on several occasions (Rev 5:6-7 / I.20.5-6; Heb 4:12 / I.26.5-6; Matt 18:12 / I.32.4), and so is overtly Christian.

The Father is incomprehensible and inconceivable (I.17.8). He is described as Unity (I.23.15); imperfection is conceived of as lack of unity. The author also attempts to grapple with the familiar problem of whether the Father is named or nameable; "for he who does not exist has no name" (I.38.11-2; cf. Basilides). The unique solution is that the Son is the name of the Father, because the Son manifests the Father.

The creator of the world is not the Father but Error. Error is not produced by the Father (I.18.2), but comes into being because of the Father, or rather because of ignorance of the Father (I.17.15). Error creates with matter and his creation is a substitute for truth (I.17.15-20) – this strong duality between truth and error underwrites the duality between the material and the spiritual; for the author, knowledge is the ultimate reality. The purpose of creation is to entice "those of the middle" and capture them (I.17.35); the middle presumably refers to those in between the Father and Error. Error will vanish when the Father is fully known (1.18.10). The creatures of Error, "material ones" (I.31.1), will not be saved but will perish with Error (I.21.35-7).

The gospel is largely silent on the aeons, which are so significant in later Valentinian mythologies. The aeons, like humans, are separated from the Father by ignorance, achieve knowledge of the Father through the Word and find rest in knowing him (I.23.1-18; I.24.15-20). However, though ascribed personhood, these aeons sometimes read as no more than attributes of God; it is only the Word (= Son) and the Holy Spirit that appear to be significantly distinguished from the Father. The Holy Spirit is rather neglected, but is described as the "bosom of the Father" (I.24.10-11) and the "tongue of the Father" (I.26.35-6). It joins people to the Father because it is the Father's revelation (I.27.1-7). The Holy Spirit also raised Jesus (I.30.19-23).

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[376] An English translation is presented by H. W. Attridge and G. W. MacRae, "The Gospel of Truth (I,3 and XII,2) in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (ed. J. M. Robinson; Leiden: Brill, 1984)40-51.
[377] Quispel, *Valentinus*, 331-2; cf. Attridge & MacRae, "Gospel of Truth", 38-9.

In terms of a divine triad, the situation is unclear. We have the Father and his manifestation, the Son (= Word). The Son exists in the mind of the Father (though this would not distinguish him from the Totality). The incarnation (if it may be called that) is not well defined, but it appears that the man Jesus put on the Word rather than a pre-existent Son putting on flesh. It is not clear whether the Holy Spirit is understood in a purely functional way, or as possessing some sort of personhood. There is the passing reference to the "Mother" (I.24.7), but without further description it is unclear whether this is the same as the Father, or the Holy Spirit, or some other thing.

Valentinus, according to Irenaeus

Irenaeus includes a brief synopsis of a myth ascribed to Valentinus. We do not know what Irenaeus' source is for this information, but he distinguishes it from the views of the "followers of Ptolemy" (AH 1.12.1): these are Irenaeus' main source of information (1.pref.2). Therefore he probably has some other text, or more likely a summary of the myth (perhaps from Justin).

According to Irenaeus (1.11.1), the myth begins with a dyad: Arrhetus (unspeakable) and Sige (silence). From this dyad proceeds a second dyad (Pater-Aletheia), resulting in the tetrad. From the tetrad proceeds two more pairs (Logos-Zoe, Anthropos-Ecclesia), resulting in the ogdoad. From Logos-Zoe proceeds ten powers, and from Anthropos-Ecclesia proceeds twelve powers, resulting in a round thirty. The last of the twelve fell and became the source of the rest of the universe. In this scheme there are two beings named Horos: one divides Bythus (= Arrhetus) from the created aeons, and the other divides the created aeons from the mother (Sophia?). The fallen mother produces Christ as a remembrance of the things she experienced before her fall. Christ divides himself from his "shadow" and ascends to the Pleroma – the shadow remains with the fallen mother. Deprived of her spiritual substance (presumably it arose with Christ); the mother brings forth the Demiurge and "a left-hand power". Apparently, Valentinus (or his followers) vary on the origins of Jesus – either from Theletus, Christ or Anthropos-Ecclesia. The Holy Spirit is produced by Alethia for the inspection of the aeons.

This myth varies considerably from the *Gospel of Truth.* The *Gospel* does not refer to a dyad, nor does it refer to Sige. In fact, the *Gospel* does not use any of the Neopythagorean numerology that seems to so fascinate the Gnostics and their dependents. The creator of the material world has also changed significantly – not Error, but a child of a fallen aeon and positively identified as the Demiurge. Unlike the *Gospel* where the Son comes forth from the Father, in this myth Christ is the product of the fallen mother. The way that the Christ ascends to the Pleroma, leaving his shadow, is more reminiscent of Basilides. The Holy Spirit is now the inspector, rather than the connector. It is difficult to see any relation between these two myths. If we are to assume a single author, or a close relation between the two authors, then it is tempting to posit the *Gospel* as the earlier. The myth recorded by Irenaeus is strongly dependent on other Gnostic myths, primarily of Barbeloite strain.

There is no overt triad in this summary. It is possible that Arrhetus-Sige-Pater are considered to be a familiar triad, but this is nowhere stated.

Ptolemy (c.150)[378]

Two texts from Ptolemy are extant: one is part of a commentary on John (see AH 1.8.5)[379], the other is his *Letter to Flora* (Epiphanius, AH 33.3.1 - 33.7.10).[380] Treating John 1:1, Ptolemy writes that John is identifying the origin of the Pleroma in the Father and his first emanations: the Son (= beginning) and the Word.

The *Letter to Flora* is perhaps more interesting, not only as an exercise in inventive biblical theology but as witness to a three-way division in early Christianity. Ptolemy, explaining to Flora the origins of the Law of Moses, comments that some say that the Law was given by the Father whilst others say that it was given by the Devil, who is also the creator of the world. According to Ptolemy both these opinions are erroneous – the Law was given by another god, intermediate between the Father and the devil; "he is the craftsman [δημιουργός] and maker of the universe" (33.7.4). The text presupposes the subsuming of Platonic concepts by the Valentinians. The Father is "simple and unique" whilst the devil is "material and divided into many parts" (33.7.7). Ptolemy also refers rather cryptically to "a twofold capacity" produced by the demiurge. The Demiurge is the "image of the better god" (33.7.7), but is neither good nor evil – he is described as being "just" (33.7.5). The Father is the father of Jesus (33.7.5). It has been suggested that the *Letter to Flora* represents the opening overtures of a Valentinian to a non-Gnostic Christian, which is why it omits much of the standard Valentinian mythology. This account posits three characters (God, Demiurge, Devil), who may correspond to three natures: spiritual, psychical and material.

Ptolemy's Myth, according to Irenaeus

In the first book of his *Against Heresies,* Irenaeus gives a detailed account of the central Valentinian myth. In the preface he notes his sources as commentaries of the disciples of Valentinus and personal discourse with Valentinians. He makes special mention of the disciples of Ptolemy and so scholars conclude that Irenaeus' account is reasonably representative of the teaching of Ptolemy and his disciples.[381]

The first principle is invisible, incomprehensible, eternal and unbegotten. He is named Proarche (first cause), Propator (ancestor) and Bythus (deep). With him exists Ennoia, also named Charis (grace) and Sige (silence). The Father wishes to bring forth the source of the Pleroma, that is, Nous. The emanation of Nous is through conjugal union; the Father depositing the seed within the womb of Sige. Alethia (truth) is also produced (we are not told how) and acts as consort to Nous. This is the first Tetrad (Bythus-Sige; Nous-Alethia), which is "the root of all things". Nous emits Logos and his consort Zoe; these in turn emit Anthropos and his consort Ecclesia. This is the first Ogdoad, which is "the root and substance of all things" (AH 1.1.1). Logos-Zoe emit another ten aeons (the Decad) and Anthrops-Ecclesia emit twelve aeons (the Duodecad), resulting in the thirty aeons of the Pleroma divided into three parts: the Ogdoad, the Decad and the Duodecad (I.1.2-3). The last aeon is Sophia.

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[378] Ptolemy is said to have been one of Valentinus' earliest disciples and founder of the "Italian" branch of the Valentinians. It is reasonable to conclude that Ptolemy lived in Rome and that he was taught by Valentinus in Rome (c. 140s). If Ptolemy is identified as the martyr of the same name mentioned by Justin (2 Apol 2) then his death occured c.152.

[379] See Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures,* 300-302

[380] See Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures,* 308-315

[381] Cf. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures,* 276-7.

Nous is described as "both similar and equal to him who had produced him" (i.e. the Father). He alone of all the aeons is able to comprehend the greatness of the Father (1.1.1). The other aeons long to know the first cause but are unable (1.2.1). Sophia in particular suffers the passions of desiring to know the Father and would have been enveloped by the Father's essence had she not been restrained by Horos. Horos was emitted from the Father by the agency of Nous, and is described as the image of the Father, and Cross, Redeemer, Emancipator, Boundary-Setter and Conveyor. Horos purifies and restores Sophia, separating her passion from the Pleroma. This passion remains shapeless and without form, but is a spiritual essence (1.2.2, 4). To prevent similar events, Nous, according to the foresight of the Father, emits another pair; Christ and the Holy Spirit. By these the aeons are taught that their knowledge of the Father was sufficient and that they should rejoice in their equality (1.2.5-6).

Sophia's passion, called Achamoth, is without form and cast into the region of emptiness. But Christ (the second one, cf. 1.3.1) takes pity on her and extends beyond the boundary ("stretched out along the cross") and confers form on her. Achamoth conceives her own angels, partly spiritual and partly from her own image (1.4.5). There are, therefore, three kinds of essence: material, which derive from her passions; animal, which derive from her conversion; spiritual, which she cannot form but come from the angels (1.5.1; cf. 1.4.2). Achamoth produces the Demiurge from animal essence and he produces all things after him. This relationship is described as a parallel of the Pleroma; Achamoth has the image of the Father, the Demiurge has the image of the Nous and the angels of the Demiurge have the image of the aeons (1.5.1). The devil is produced by the Demiurge from grief (1.5.4).

Comparing this myth with the slender details that Irenaeus records of Valentinus, (see above) we find several significant developments. In this version, Sophia is restored to the Pleroma, and not excluded by Horos – it is Achamoth that produces the Demiurge. Achamoth is seen more positively, as a sort of intermediary between the Pleroma and the universe. It is she who produces the saviour; she produces the Demiurge but not the Devil. The hierarchy of the myth is also more formally developed, with Achamoth – Demiurge – Devil corresponding to three levels of essence (cf. *Letter to Flora*). Most significant is the central role given to Nous (replacing Pater in Valentinus' version). It is Nous who produces Horos; it is Nous who produces Christ and the Holy Spirit: Nous alone is able to comprehend the Father. The concept that Nous is "similar and equal" to the Father is a concept paralleled by the equality of the second principle with the first in the mythologies of the Simonians and of Basilides. Nous appears to be a fusion of the Platonic Nous with the Christian Son. This being said, the attributes of the Christian Son seem to be divided across several aeons: Nous is called Monogenes (1.1.1; cf. John 1:18), Paraclete is called saviour (1.4.5) and at least three characters are called Christ. Similarly, Achamoth is only one of several characters called Holy Spirit (1.4.1; cf. 1.5.3) and it is difficult to keep count of the number of characters called Father. Part of the reason for this may be the incorporation of the names of previous myths into one scheme; for example, Nous is identified as Father [Pater] (cf. Valentinus). Another reason must be the Valentinian urge to justify their mythology with reference to scripture (cf. 1.3.2-6); presumably this is why Christ is also called Logos despite there already being an aeon called Logos (1.4.1).

In terms of triads, it is significant that of the primary tetrad, the fourth member (Alethia) is almost completely ignored. She is necessary to fulfil the role of consort and to

complete the tetrad, but it is the other three members who are significant. It is Nous alone, of all the aeons, who is "similar and equal" with Bythus and who has perfect knowledge of him. Viewed in this way, Bythus-Sige-Nous form a father-mother-son triad. This triad is, in part, mirrored outside the Pleroma by the relationships between Christ-Achamoth-Demiurge. Finally, it is in this myth that the Valentinian doctrine of three essences (spiritual-animal-material) is applied to levels of existence and their representatives. The spiritual essence corresponds to the Pleroma, the source and ultimate home of the spiritual beings. The animal essence corresponds to the supracelestial, as the resting place for good (but not spiritual) persons. The material essence corresponds to the world that is to be destroyed. As Achamoth will ascend to the Pleroma, and Demiurge to the supracelestial, these characters correspond to the spiritual and the animal respectively. The material realm (i.e. the world) is ruled by the Devil. Therefore we have a triad of essences and a triad of rulers, with the Demiurge in an intermediate position (cf. *Letter to Flora*). We find similar tripartite divisions of essence, with corresponding rulers, amongst the Platonists (cf. Plutarch; cf. Apuleius).

Heracleon (c.150+)[382]

Though regarded by Clement as "the most celebrated member of the Valentinian school" (*Misc.* 4.71), we know little about him. It is impossible to reconstruct a mythology from the extant fragments; it seems reasonable to assume that Heracleon adopted the same general mythology as other Valentinians and allusions in the fragments seem to bear this out. The first principle is the Father (fr.20), who is described as "undefiled, pure and invisible" (fr.24). There is also reference to the first Tetrad (fr.16) and the Pleroma (fr.1). The emanation of the Saviour is not described, except to state that he comes into existence after the Pleroma. According to Heracleon, it is the Saviour (= Word) that "provided the energy" for the Demiurge to create the world (fr.1).[383] The Demiurge is inferior to the Saviour (fr.8) and is taught by him (fr.40). We should probably identify the Saviour with the (second) Christ of Ptolemy's myth (see above). The Jews worship the Demiurge but the "spiritual" are instructed not to (fr.20). We have reference to the Jews worshipping angels (fr.21).

As with Ptolemy, we find three natures, which are associated with three realms: spiritual, psychical (animate) and material. The spiritual will ascend to the Pleroma, whilst the animate will "attain a salvation outside the Pleroma" (fr.13). The spiritual have the "same nature" as the Father (fr.24), a nature which is imperishable, uniform and unique (fr.37). The spiritual has a partner/consort within the Pleroma and through the Saviour they may obtain the union with their partner in the Pleroma (fr.18). Jesus had a dual nature; that is, his spiritual person abided within an imperfect body (fr.10). The material persons are "of the substance of the Devil" (fr.44), who is himself described as "one part of the whole of matter" (fr.20). Heracleaon says that the Devil has "no will, but only desires" (fr.46); presumably because he has no soul but is only material. It is also interesting to note that according to Heracleaon you can become "children of the Devil"

[382] He is associated with the Italian or Western school of Valentinianism and is quoted by Clement and Origen. On this basis we might assume that he was active in Rome sometime in latter half of the second century, perhaps as successor to Ptolemy, or we might assume that he active in Alexandria, or, as Pearson suggests, "he was an Alexandrian who spent some time in Rome as Valentinian teacher and then returned to Alexandria" (Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism,* 161-2). The fact that Origen references Heracleon so extensively, and sometimes favourably, indicates the influence of Heracleon within the Christian community.

[383] Heracleon differs with Ptolemy on the interpretation of John 1, identifying the Logos as the Saviour and "all things" (John 1:3) as the material world (fr.5).

intentionally by acting on the desires of the Devil; presumably the desires of the material body (fr.46).

Hercleaon attests to a Saviour-Demiurge-Devil triad, corresponding to the three realms: spiritual, psychical and material. He also likely posited a father-mother-child triad as Ptolemy did, but this is not explicit in any extant fragment.

The Tripartite Tractate (early 3rd C)[384]

Though Quispel asserts that the *Tractate* preserves some elements of the original doctrine of Valentinus,[385] the text seems to differ in many important aspects from other known forms of Valentinianism. This difference may be a result of conscious attempts to make Valentinianism more compatible with orthodox Christianity, perhaps indicated by the implication that the psychical will also enter the Pleroma and that orthodox baptism is acceptable.[386] Such a motivation might explain the emphasis on the Logos, who has taken the role of Sophia, and even the shift from a primal tetrad to a primal triad. However, as we shall see, there seems to be the strong influence of Middle Platonism.[387]

The Father is described as "the root of the Totality" (51.3-4). Rarely for Valentinian systems, the Father does not have a consort (cf. Hipploytus, *Ref.* 6.29.2-8); although he is said to exist "in silence" (55.36). As with Platonic monist systems, the Father is described in many negative terms; he is inimitable, immutable (51.23-24), unattainable, inscrutable, incomprehensible, unfathomable (53.1-5) and unnameable (54.3). We also find the Father described with familiar Platonic titles, such as the One (51.9) and the Good (53.6). This Platonic influence is clearly apparent in the concepts of the self-begettal of the Father and his unity with his "offspring". The Father is said to "beget himself" and this action of begetting is described in terms of self-knowledge (56.1-6). Whilst this concept of self-conception is familiarly Platonic, it also coheres suitably with the Valentinian emphasis on the importance of knowledge, particularly knowledge of the Father. It is the Father's wish to "grant knowledge so that he might be known" (55.31-32) that results in emanation; given that the Father is said to be indivisible from his offspring (58.20-21), the entire system may be seen as a continuous act of the Father coming to know himself.

The description of the emanation of the Totality may seem unplatonic as it is presented as creation *ex nihilo* (53.31-35); explicitly without paradigm (53.27-29), but the Totality corresponds to the Platonic realm of the Forms and serves as the paradigm for the material creation (78.30-34; 81.30f). The aeons are not precisely the thoughts of the Father, but extensions from the thought of the Father (73.18-25; cf. 60.2-3). Much like the One of Plotinus, the Father is an "undiminished spring" (60.13-14), and through this

[384]The *Tripartite Tractate* is generally regarded as "revisionist" and consequently is dated later than the other Valentinian texts considered(Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism,*187; cf. H. W. Attridge *et al*, "The Tripartite Tractate (I,5)" in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (ed. J. M. Robinson; Leiden: Brill, 1984)58-60). Some scholars have noted similarities with Heracleon (e.g. eternal generation of the Son; role of the Logos) and so assigned it to the Western school (Quispel, "Valentinus", 349, 352); others assign it to the Eastern school (Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism,*187; cf. Attridge *et al*, "Tripartite Tractate", 58). For introduction and translation see Attridge *et al*, "Tripartite Tractate", 58-103

[385] Quispel, "Valentinus", 352.

[386] Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 187

[387]Also see Kenney, "Tripartite Tractate".

procession the Father is identified with and indivisible from his emanations (53.8-9; 54.1; 58.20-21).

The Son, though begotten by the Father as an act of thought (56.35-36), is co-eternal with the Father. In an argument similar to one that will appear in later Christian theology, it is maintained that because the Father is a father, therefore there must be a son (51.12-14). The Son subsists in the Father; "the ineffable one in the ineffable one" (56.24-27). The Son is also identified with the Totality (65.25); "he is each and every one of the totalities forever at the same time" (67.8-10). The danger of such an identification is that everything becomes identified with everything else, when in fact the Totality and the aeons are clearly distinguished from the Son; they all form part of the same procession from the Father. The Son is the "firstborn" (57.18). The Son "brought the Father to the totalities" (67.8-11), that is, knowledge of the Father; the Son is "as light" for the aeons (62.33f).

The third member of the primal triad is the Church. It "too existed from the beginning" (57.34-35), but its emergence is not clearly described. It seems to be composite, "consisting of many men that existed before the aeons" (58.30-31) and subsisting in the aeons (59.6-7). In this sense, the emergence of the individual aeons is the emergence of the Church.

The aeons are defined for us as "each of the properties and powers of the Father" (73.8-11). They exist within the thought of the Father but they are unable to know themselves or anything else (60.16-26). The Father gives them form (60.12), after which they begin to search for the Father (61.26), but are not given immediate knowledge of the him lest they perish (64.30-37). Remarkably, this process is described as the aeons bringing themselves forth (74.18-21). The Logos is an aeon (75.18) who forms the world. The Father "withdraws", which establishes a limit that allows the world to be organised (77.1-10). The Logos is divided by doubt (77.20-1); the upper Logos abandons the lower Logos (78.1-6), who is (of course) female (78.11). The lower Logos creates the world, after the likeness of things in the Pleroma (78.30-34). The creative power of the lower Logos is limited by the absence of the upper Logos; she is troubled by the imperfections in the world but powerless to prevent them (80.15-24).

The Saviour is "an unbegotten, impassible one" (113.37-38); "an image of the unitary one" (115.28-29). He brought forth himself "from him [i.e. the Father] and from the entire perfection" (86.6-7). He is called "Son" by analogy with the Son, because both teach the aeons of the Church. The Saviour receives his flesh from the upper (spiritual) Logos and descends to intercede for the lower Logos (86.8-9), bringing perfection to the lower Logos (87.2-4) through the knowledge of the Father (87.16).

The *Tractate* also refers to three essences – spiritual , psychic and material – and explains them as "conforming to the triple disposition of the Logos" (118.15-20). This might imply some third aspect to the Logos, but only two (upper and lower) are mentioned.

The relevance and influence of non-Gnostic Christianity seems limited. There does seem to be an attempt to associate the Saviour (i.e. Jesus) more closely with the primal Son, but it does not come closer than analogy. On the other hand, there appears to be no attempt at identifying the Logos more closely with either the Son or the Saviour. Rather,

by using Logos as the fallen (and female) Sophia figure, the *Tractate* moves further away from non-Gnostic Christian understanding. It is questionable, then, to what extent the author was attempting to make Valentinianism more compatible with orthodox Christianity. Arguably, the motivation may be more likely to rationalise Valentinian mythology in the light of criticisms that the numerous aeons and emanations are superfluous.[388] The divided Logos, though with precedent in the multiple Sophia figures of earlier systems, may be intended to correspond to the dual demiurgic figures of Platonic systems (cf. Numenius[389]). The term "Logos" may be preferred over "Sophia" for that very reason. Similarly, the third member of the primal triad, Church, is not identified with the orthodox Holy Spirit (*pace* Quispel) but may correspond to the World Soul, inasmuch as it is a composite of spiritual men. Of course, for the author the Church is spiritual, not psychical, but after all for several Platonists the World Soul is also noetic. Therefore, the shift from primal tetrad to primal triad may have nothing whatsoever to do with a Christian trinity but with Platonic triads. The *Tractate* does refer to Father, Son and Spirit in the baptismal formula (127.31-32) and seemingly in the doxology (138.20-27). It is not clear whether the author intended these to be reconciled with other characters.

d. Summary

Gnosticism, and its cognate systems, generated mythologies with a plethora (perhaps we should say pleroma) of characters. Yet certain groups of characters are explicitly mentioned as triads or seem to have special significance within the mythology such that they may be identified as triads.

Familial Triad

Perhaps the dominant triad in early forms of Gnosticism is a familial triad, consisting of a father, a mother and a child. Whilst we might intuitively associate the father figure with God, we should be cautious of assuming that this figure is easily reconcilable with either Platonic or Christian Gods. As Gnosticism develops, the father figure is understood through negative theology and begins to converge with the Platonic One (explicitly in *The Tripartite Tractate* and *Allogenes*). The fatherhood of this figure is not understood, as in the teaching of Jesus, as a close filial relationship with believers, but as source of all things and of the child-figure. The father-figure is neither a creator nor sustainer; he is aloof and distant. Though knowledge of the father-figure seems essential, it is also difficult to obtain. The early Gnostic systems are not monist but have two first principles; a father and a mother.

In our earliest account of the Barbeloite mythology (i.e. Irenaeus), the mother-figure is not identified as thought (Ennoia), but is a passive figure. This is reflected in the mythology ascribed to Valentius, where the mother-figure, Sige, is not identified as thought. The identification of the mother with thought first occurs in the *Apocryphon of John* (Barbeloite) and the mythology ascribed to Ptolemy (Valentinian), perhaps indicating that this transition took place in the mid-second century. The original mythology involved an uncreated and passive mother-figure, existing with the father. Whilst there are some Platonic parallels for this scheme, such as the Pythagorean opposites or the apparent familial triad of Philo (God-Sophia-Logos), the original of this early Gnostic triad may be a pagan theogony. That Simon and Menander had held that

[388] Cf. Kenney, "Tripartite Tractate", 202

[389] Direct or indirect dependence on Numenius has been suggested by several scholars; see Kenney, "Tripartite Tractate", 200; Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism*, 53.

thought (Ennoia) was both an emanation and the consort of God may suggest that this concept was originally an independent scheme, later incorporated into the Barbeloite mythology. Later the Barbeloite system became monist and the mother-figure was able to receive the attributes of the Platonic Nous. In turn this leads to speculation about the origin of the mother-figure that parallels Platonic ideas about the conception of the intellect. Ultimately, the speculation will lead to the conception of another triad: the Triple-Powered One (see below). As the role of second intellect becomes more significant, the mother-aspect of the figure becomes less important; the Begotten Power in *The Great Declaration* is perhaps a consequence of this de-feminizing.

The child figure is explicitly named "Christ" in the Barbeloite mythology and in the mythology ascribed to Ptolemy (as "Nous"), but not in mythology ascribed to Valentinus ("Pater"). This is presumably because in the Barbeloite mythology the child-figure is also the saviour-figure, whereas in the Valentinian mythology the saviour-figure is a lower aeon. Both the name "Christ" and his soterological function in the Barbeloite mythology recommends a Christian milieu for this element, probably overlaid on a non-Christian familial triad. The other function of the child-figure in the Barbeloite mythology, as begetter of the four angelic-luminaries from whom Sophia emanates; or in Ptolemy's mythology, as agent for the father-figure, is not Christian and implies some prior scheme. The role of the saviour-figure in the schemes of Simon and Menander lacks these extra functions and is in this sense, closer to Christianity. As the Barbeloite mythology is de-Christianized, the saviour-figure loses the name "Christ" and is identified as Autogenes. In the Valentinian tradition, the separation of the soterological function from the child-figure and his naming as "Nous" allows the child-figure to take on the attributes of the Platonic Nous, as in the *Tripartite Tractate* where the Son is the totality of the intellectual realm. The demiurgic function is stripped from the intellect and given to the Logos, perhaps making convenient use of the dual-identification of Nous and Logos in the Platonic tradition (cf. Plutarch).

Waldsten has argued that the Gnostic familial triad is a Middle Platonic scheme; "Sethian and Valentinian texts are important as witnesses to an otherwise unattested Middle Platonic scheme later unfolded by Plotinus".[390] He argues that this triadic scheme, rooted in the *Timaeus* ("mother" 47e; "child" 50cd), developed into Plato's One-Dyad-Ideas triad and Philo's God-Sophia-Logos triad.[391] However, it seems to me that the Platonic elements of the Gnostic familial triad are secondary and imposed upon a pre-existing scheme. The father is not the demiurge; he later takes on some of the characteristics of the One. The mother is not the receptacle, matter or plurality; she later takes on some of the characteristics of Nous. The son is not a product or paradigmic; he sometimes has demiurgic, revelatory or soterological functions. Whilst Gnostic schemes do take on Platonic elements as they evolve, it would be unwise to conclude that their ideas were Platonic without corroboration from a known Platonic source.

Three-Male Triad

A second Gnostic triad is seen in the three-male triad of the Ophite mythology, consisting of a father-figure, a son-figure and a saviour-figure. In the earliest extant version (i.e. Irenaeus), the father-figure is a transcendent God; the son-figure is his thought (Ennoia) and the saviour-figure is Christ. However, these attributes do not seem

[390] M. Waldsten, "The Primal Triad in the *Apocryphon of John*" in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years* (eds. J. D. Turner & A. McGuire; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 180
[391] Waldsten, "Primal Triad", 179

to be retained throughout later versions. The Ophite Diagram is not explicitly triadic, though it does seem to correspond to the pentad of characters described by Irenaeus. The Son, whilst seemingly subsumed within the Father, is not explicitly identified as his thought. The saviour-figure, if identified correctly, is only described as "Love". In *Eugnostos* the three-male triad has been subordinated to two transcendent father figures, stripping the first male of his (explicit) fatherhood. Nevertheless the functions of the other two males are still apparent, at least in their names "son of man" and "saviour".

It is possible that the mythology ascribed to Basilides by Hippolytus represents a developmental stage between the original Ophite mythology and *Eugnostos*, with one transcendent father figure over a triad of three sonships. The first sonship is able to ascend to the level of the non-existent father; the third remains outside the super-mundane realm as a saviour-figure. It is also possible that the syncretism of the Ophite and Barbeloite mythology, seen in the naming of Barbelo as "first man" and "thrice male" in the *Apocryphon of John*, was a precursor to the conception of the Triple-Powered One (note that the third figure, Autogenes, is the saviour-figure).

Platonic Triad

Throughout the Middle Platonic period we see the emergence of elements that will ultimately take shape as the One-Intellect-Soul triad of Plotinus. Given the interaction between Gnosticism and Platonism, we should not be surprised to see similar elements occur in Gnostic schemes and their cognates. We have already noted how negative theology is incorporated into these schemes, often to ridiculous extremes. We have also noted that the concept of an emanating intellect is incorporated with either mother or son figures. However, the occurrences of the World Soul are fewer and less obvious. One possibility we have noted is that Church, in the *Tripartite Tractate*, has some of the characteristics of the World Soul. However, there are several obstacles to the more explicit syncretism. Firstly, in the Valentinian tradition (amongst others), the psychical nature is separate from the spiritual, making the occurrence of a Soul-figure within the spiritual (or super-celestial) realm unlikely. Secondly, the function of the World Soul, either as world-orderer or world-sustainer, are functions that the Gnostics want to ascribe to malign or ignorant characters.

Plotinus, when writing against the Gnostics, ascribes to them a triad of passive mind, visionary mind and planning mind (or soul). These are not the only characters known to him, as he criticises them for positing more than his three hypostases. It is possible, therefore, that Plotinus is interpreting the Gnostics through his own schema. Since Plotinus criticises the Gnostics for ascribing a fall to the Soul, he presumably identified Soul and Sophia. Comparison with *Zostrianos* would suggest that this triad should be identified as Invisible Spirit, Mother, and Sophia. The Sophia figure did not have her origins in the Platonic World Soul, though it is possible she began to take on some of its functions and attributes.

Three-in-One Triad

As Gnosticism took on Platonic conceptions of the emergence of the second intellect through self-contemplation, it devised a triad to explain this process. Perhaps utilising material from three male triads, it conceives of the three stages of emanation as three aeons. The names of these aeons characterise each stage of the process. Kalyptos, meaning "concealed", refers to Barbelo hidden as thought within the Invisible One; Protophanes, meaning "first manifest", refers to the formation of Barbelo as an image or

manifestation of the Invisble One; Autogenes, meaning "self-originate", refers to Barbelo's independent existence. This seems paralleled in *The Great Declaration*, where the Begotten Power (= Standing One) emerges from the Unbegotten Power in three stages of standing. He stood hidden within the Unbegotten Power, then he stood as an image of the Unbegotten Power, and finally he stands next to the Unbegotten Power. This three phrase emergence allows the second intellect to emanate without the action of the first and without creating a sharp distinction between the two. Whilst the Standing One is a single entity described in three phases, the Triple-Powered One is conceived as both a single entity and three separate aeons. If viewed temporally it would be difficult to see how Kalyptos or Protophanes could exist once their phase was complete, but the "Platonizing" Gnostics were adamant that the three are concurrent; this is presumably because the emanation of Barbelo is an eternal procession, not a temporal event. The result is a co-ordinate trinity. There are other examples of Gnostics referring to multiple persons/aeons as a single being (Ap.John 2.5,9; Ref VI.7, VII.10), but this is, perhaps, the clearest example of a co-ordinate triad of three co-eternal aeons.

Others Triads

Of the other triadic patterns within Gnosticism and its cognates, the most significant is the Valentinian distinction between three essences. These three essences each have a realm. The spiritual realm is the abode of the aeons and the destiny of spiritual men; the psychical realm is heaven and the destiny of good, though not spiritual, men; the material realm is our present world, which is destined for destruction. A number of characters are coordinated with these three realms. Achamoth is destined to ascend to the spiritual realm, the Demiurge to the psychical and the Devil is destined to be destroyed with the material realm. The three figures mentioned in the *Letter to Flora* (Father, Demiurge and Devil) may also be coordinated with these three realms.

4. Before Justin (30-150)

a. Introduction

It is my thesis that the emergence of an ontological triad within Christian thought coincided with Christian engagement with similar developments in non-Christian thought. The substantive part of this thesis will be the analysis of those Christian thinkers who were most actively engaged with pagan thought, namely Justin and those closest to his ideas. However, to corroborate this thesis, it is necessary to say something about Christianity prior to the work of Justin in order to address two questions:

1. Was there significant engagement of Christians with Platonism and/or Gnosticism prior to the work of Justin?
2. Was there an ontological triad within Christian thought prior to the work of Justin?

If the answer to both these questions is in the negative, then this will lend credence to the idea that the Christian ontological triad emerged as a consequence of Christian engagement with pagan thought.

In this section, I will briefly survey prominent Christian thinkers prior to Justin. This survey cannot hope to be exhaustive or to give voice to the spectrum of opinions dotted along this well-travelled road. None of the thinkers considered are blessed by scholarly unanimity and there are ongoing disagreements about both methodology and interpretation. Even where there is broader scholarly consensus, I have not followed that consensus in every case. What is presented here is a plausible reconstruction of the thought of this period.

i.Influence of Philosophy

There is little evidence of the influence of philosophy on the early Christians. Jesus and his immediate followers were uneducated by Greek standards; their thought-world is the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism.

Paul was born in Tarsus (Acts 9:11, 21:39, 22:3), a city noted for its Stoic philosophy;[392] he was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37-38, 22:25-26; 23:27), and perhaps had the benefit of a wealthy patron (Acts 13:7); yet this might not make a Hellenistic education "a given".[393] Paul had family in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16) and almost certainly came there as a child (cf. Acts 22:3).[394] The extent of Paul's education must be judged from his letters. Hock argues that Paul demonstrates primary (e.g. use of maxims; cf. 1 Cor 15:33),[395] secondary (e.g. citations from Greek writers)[396] and even tertiary level Hellenistic education.[397] Yet, even if we grant that Paul had a tertiary level education, this would

[392] E. M. Yamauchi, "Hellenism" in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (eds. G. F. Hawthorne & R. P. Martin; Leicester: IVP, 1993) 386

[393] *Pace* R. F. Hock, "Paul and Greco-Roman Education", in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. J. P. Sampley; Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003) 193. Haacker reasons "he called himself a 'Hebrew' (2 Cor 11:12) ... a term which in the light of Acts 6:1 marks the opposite of Hellenistic Jews" (K. Haacker, "Paul's Life" in *The Cambridge Companion to St Paul* (ed. J. D. G. Dunn; CUP, 2003) 21).

[394] Yamauchi, "Hellenism", 386; Haacker, "Paul's Life", 21

[395] Hock, "Paul and Greco-Roman Education", 208

[396] Hock, "Paul and Greco-Roman Education", 202

[397] Hock, "Paul and Greco-Roman Education", 209

likely to have been education in rhetoric and oratory, rather than philosophy.[398] Paul's citations from Greek sources[399] are relatively sparse and proverbial in character; "they do not prove that Paul read these literary works".[400] It has been argued that Paul adopts some terminology from Stoicism,[401] but these terms may have already entered common usage.

It was previously argued that John borrows the term *logos* from Stoicism or Platonism in an effort to make the gospel message accessible to a Greek audience. This argument has now been almost universally rejected as more satisfying precedents for the prologue have been found in Second Temple Judaism. In the epistles of Ignatius we begin to see the use of some philosophical terminology with reference to the attributes of God, but this terminology had probably passed into general usage and would not require any significant engagement with philosophy.

The first significant engagement with philosophical concepts comes with the early apologetic texts: the *Preaching of Peter*, the *Apology of Aristides* and the *Epistle to Diognetus.*[402] The first of these texts is fragmentary, so little more can be done than noting the ascription of negative attributes to God. The author does commend the "good Greeks" (i.e. philosophers), who he says worship the same god "though not according to perfect knowledge" (*Preaching* fr.2 = Clement, *Stromata* 6.5.39).

According to the subscription of the Armenian version (cf. Syriac), Aristides was an "Athenian philosopher". This might imply that he was associated with one of the philosophical schools of Athens; however, it is not clear which school this might be, given that his apology shows no special affinity with any philosophical tradition. It is possible that he was a philosopher before his conversion, although he does not say so in his own brief account (Apol 16 [Syr]). His arguments show some familiarity with philosophical sources. For instance, his appeal to a cause for the motions of the universe has some similarity with the Aristotle's concept of the Unmoved Mover (cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.6-9), though a second century Greek could pick this up from handbooks (cf. Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 10.4). His arguments regarding the futility of idolatry are an extension of the biblical denunciations,[403] but show some similarity with Plato's objections to the humanity of the traditional gods (cf. Plato, *Republic* II.377d-391d); though again these would not be unfamiliar to consumers of popular philosophy (cf. Maximus of Tyre, *Orations* 11.3). His negative theology (cf. Apol. 1 [Syr]), though innovative by Christian standards, does not show the same complexity of the Middle Platonists. He does not follow the negative way of seeking to comprehend God by the gradual elimination of positive attributes.[404] Rather, negative terms are used to express the positive attributes of God, in contrast to manmade idols. Van den Broek has argued that the apology of Aristides shows affinities with *Eugnostos* in its use of negative theology, both texts employing a similar structure of argument. For example, "he has no name, for everything which has a name is kindred to things created" (Apol. 1 [Syr]) and

[398] Hock, "Paul and Greco-Roman Education", 204
[399] Aratus, *Phaenomena* 5 (Acts 17:28); Menader, *Thais* (1 Cor 15:33); Epimenides, *De Oraculis* (Tit 1:12)
[400] Yamauchi, "Hellenism", 386
[401] J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (London: T&T Clark, 2003) 38
[402] T. E. Gaston, "The Influence of Platonism on the Early Apologists", *The Heythrop Journal* 50:4 (2009)
[403] "worship things created instead of their Creator" (Apol. 3 [Syr]; cf. Rom 1:25); "But God is not in need" (Apol. 13 [Syr]; cf. Acts 17:25); "who are no gods" (Apol. 8 [Syr]) (cf. Isa 37:19).
[404] D. W. Palmer, "Atheism, Apologetic, and Negative Theology in The Greek Apologists of the Second Century", *Vigiliae Christianae* 37:3 (1983) 234.

"he has no name, for whoever has a name is the creation of another" (*Eugnostos* III.72.1-2).[405]Van den Broek proposes a common source for this form argument: Xenophanes.[406] Palmer, noting the contrast between the negative theology of Aristides and that of the Middle Platonists, also proposes that Aristides (and other Christian apologists) is dependent on the Presocratics.[407] As well as arguing that the first principle is ungenerated and without change or motion (B25, 26 = Simplicius, *Commentary on the Physics* 22.26-23.20), Xenophanes criticised Homer and Hesiod for the shameful behaviour attributed to the gods (B11, 12 = Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* IX 193, I 289) and rejected the anthropomorphism of the gods (B14, 15 = Clement, *Miscellanies* V.14.109.1-3). Given his extant comments about the elements (cf. B27, 29, 30, 33), it is possible that Xenophanes is the prompt for Aristides' otherwise tangential comment, "moreover the wind is obedient to God, and fire to the angels; the waters also to the demons and the earth to the sons of men" (Apol 2 [Syr]). Xenophanes affirms "there is one god" (B23), but also seems to equate God with the universe (cf. Simplicius, *Commentary on the Physics* 22.26f), which is perhaps echoed in the phrase "God ... while he is one, is in all" (Apol 13 [Syr]). This being said, not everything is explained by appeal to Xenophanes. For example, Aristides writes "philosophers among them have wrongly alleged that the gods are such as are made in honour of God Almighty" (Apol 13 [Syr]). This "allegation" is not found in Xenophanes, but is put forward by Maximus of Tyre (*Orations* 2.3). This criticism by Aristides captures the inconsistency amongst many philosophers of this period who affirmed one God as first principle, whilst retaining the traditional gods (cf. Apuleius). This perceived inconsistency may explain why Aristides does not join the author of the *Preaching* in commending the "good Greeks".

It has been suggested that the *Epistle to Diognetus* exhibits some engagement with Platonic philosophy. For example, it is noted that *Diognetus* is one of, if not the, earliest Christian texts to call the Son of God "the Demiurge" (Diog 7:2).[408] It is also suggested that the author uses the concept of a world-soul as a metaphor for Christians (Diog 6:1ff).[409] But neither example is particularly powerful. God was previously called Demiurge by Christian writers without any direct allusion to the *Timaeus* (cf. Heb 11:10); the significant development here is the transfer of the title from the Father to the Son. Read correctly, there is no world-soul mentioned; the analogy is between soul-body and Christians-world pairings; no reference to Platonism is indicated or required. His description of God – "he alone is good" (Diog 8.8) – is more likely an allusion to Mark 10:18 than an identification of the Demiurge with the Good. *Diognetus* criticises "those specious philosophers", who identify the elements as gods (i.e. the presocratics; Diog 8:2). The author does not criticise Platonists; this more likely indicates ignorance rather than praise. He rejects the idea that God can be known except by revelation (Diog 8.6; cf. *Preaching*).

ii. Influence of Gnosticism

As considered above, dating Gnosticism as a religious phenomenon is notoriously difficult. Whilst some scholars have attempted to trace the origins of Gnosticism to Jewish groups of the first century, (or even to the preceding century) the systems

[405]Van den Broek, "Eugnostos and Aristides", 28
[406]Van den Broek, "Eugnostos and Aristides", 35
[407] Palmer, "Atheism, Apologetic, and Negative Theology", 234-6
[408]Gaston, "Early Apologists", 577.
[409]P. Foster, "The Epistle to Diognetus",*ET* 118:4 (2007) 165.

considered in this thesis cannot be dated with confidence to earlier than the second century. Some scholars have sought to extrapolate backwards from these second century movements to "proto-Gnostic" groups, who are then identified with those repudiated in the Pauline and Johannine epistles. Given the speculative nature of such a methodology, the advice of Wilson seems apt: "we probably should not claim as 'Gnostic influence' those elements in the New Testament which are capable of another interpretation *as well as the Gnostic*".[410] For example, those repudiated in *1 Corinthians* and *Colossians* are probably more readily identifiable as extreme Judaizers or as under the influence of Jewish mysticism.[411] Even in the Pastorals (which may be inauthentic and late), the opponents of Paul can be satisfactorily identified as Judaizers (e.g. 1 Tim 1:7).[412] Given the existence of other docetic Christians (cf. Cerinthus), those repudiated by John need not be identified as Gnostic;[413] whether this early doceticism precipitated or encouraged later Gnosticism is uncertain. In any case, the chances that Paul or John were influenced by Gnosticism are remote.

It has been repeatedly suggested that Ignatius is familiar with Valentinianism. He certainly condemns doceticism (Ign. *Tral* 10:1; Ign. *Smyr* 2:1) and claims knowledge of the angelic regions (Ign.*Tral* 5.1-2; Ign.*Smyr* 6:1). Lechner proposes Ign.*Eph* 19 was a parody of Valentinian myth.[414] Attention has often focused on Ign.*Mag* 8:2, which in the Greek version reads: "his Word that did not come forth from silence [σιγῆς]" and is taken as a repudiation of Valentinian mythology.[415] However, Lightfoot and most subsequent editors omit ἀΐδιος οὐκ, since such repudiation would be awkward in this context and the amended reading seems consistent with Ignatius' description of the incarnation in Ign.*Eph* 18-19. Barnes has noted the close parallels between Ign.*Poly* 3.2 and a passage by Ptolemy (AH 1.6.1), arguing that the combination of ψηλαφητός with ὁρατός is almost unique to these passages and their dependents.[416] However, his assumption that Ignatius must be dependent on Ptolemy seems unwarranted, as the reserve seems just as likely.

A few lines in the *Epistle to Diognetus* might be read as a repudiation of some form of Gnosticism. "When he [i.e. God] had a great and inexpressible thought [ἔννοιαν], he communicated it to his child alone" (Diog 8.9); rather than a pleroma of aeons to whom God reveals himself, the child alone is inducted in the "wise plan" of God. Similarly, instead of an exclusive and partial revelation, God "shared all things with us at once" through the revelation of his child (Diog 8.11). Nevertheless, both these examples can be read without reference to Gnosticism.

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[410]R. M. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) 35.

[411] E. M. Yamauchi, "Gnosis, Gnosticism" in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (eds. G. F. Hawthorne & R. P. Martin; Leicester: IVP, 1993) 351-3

[412]Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, 41

[413]Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, 40

[414]Other passages which might indicate familiarity with some form of Gnosticism see Ign. *Tral* 6:1-2; Ign.*Phild* 6:1; Ign.*Smyr* 6:1-2, 7:1; Ign.*Eph* 19. Cf. W. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary* (Fortress, 1985)19; Grant, "Earliest Christian Gnosticism", 96; P. Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (Part 1)", *ET* 117 (2006) 493; T. D. Barnes, "The Date of Ignatius", *ET* 120:3 (2008) 126.

[415] Also see *Gospel of Truth:* "the one Word in silent grace" (1.37.11-12). L. W. Barnard, "The Background of St. Ignatius of Antioch", *Vigiliae Christianae* 17:4 (1963) 202.Barnes, "Date of Ignatius", 125.

[416] Barnes, "Date of Ignatius", 123-5

b. Jesus of Nazareth (c.30)

It is a telling irony that one of the best attested historical figures considered in this thesis has also been the subject of the greatest academic scepticism. There continues to be significant methodological disagreement about how to approach the "historical Jesus". Regarding source material, the disagreement ranges from those scholars who accept as authentic only a (hypothetical) unredacted version of the (hypothetical) Q-gospel, to those who accept even substantial parts of John's gospel. Whilst not presupposing any text to be authentic, I have based my analysis primarily on *Mark* and Q, but with attention also given to other sources. The apologists would have accepted the canonical gospels as authentic depictions of Jesus.

Jesus on God

There can be little doubt that the God whom Jesus proclaimed he also identified with YHWH (cf. Matt 15:31; cf. Q 4:1-13; 7:18-23; 7:24-28; 11:29-32), and his use of Shema implies an exclusive Jewish monotheism (Mark 12:29-30; cf. Matt 12:33; cf. Luke 10:27). By rejecting the description "good" (Mark 10:17-18; cf. Matt 19:16-30; Luke 18:18-30), Jesus went beyond usual deference[417] and usual worship-practice,[418] in an overt act of piety by which he distinguished himself from his God. This understanding of God as YHWH underscores what little that might be called cosmogony there is to be found in the teaching of Jesus. In Mark 10:6-9 (cf. Matt 19:4-6; cf. 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31), Jesus affirms the creation of humans by God (citing Gen 1:27, 2:24) and by implication, the Genesis record of creation in the "beginning" (cf. ἀρχῆς*;* Mark 10:6; cf. Mark 13:19).

Beyond the conception of God as the OT creator, Jesus places profound emphasis on the fatherhood of God. Leaving aside Jesus' own filial consciousness (see below), the teaching of Jesus is saturated with the concept of God as the Father of believers (cf. Q 6:36; 11:2; 11:9-13; 12:22-31; cf. GTh 3, 27, 40, 50). He is not just father in the sense of begetter (Mal 2:10) or even protector (1 Chr 29:10; Ps 89:26),[419] but "father" captures the relationship between God and believers.[420] God is a forgiving father (Mark 11:25; cf. Q 6:36), a caring father (Q 12:24), who is to be addressed in prayer as such (Q 11:2).[421] Just as human fathers are loving providers for their children, so the heavenly father is a loving provider for believers (Q 11:9-13; cf. Matt 7:9-11; GTh 2, 92, 94; cf. John 16:23-24). The intimacy implied goes to the level of filial familiarity; "the community of followers have become God's family".[422] The Father is "primarily a near and approachable God".[423] There is no sense here of the disinterested God of Aristotle, or the unapproachable God of the Middle Platonists.

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[417] It is not unheard of for a rabbi to be called good, and even were it not attested, there would not seem to be any impropriety in an individual being addressed as such. Collins gives two examples: A. Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) 477.

[418] Though in the OT God is worshipped for being good (1 Chr 16:34; 2 Chr 5:13, 7:3; Ezra 3:11; Ps 106:1, 107:1, 118:1, 29, 136:1), there is nothing exclusively divine about this adjective (Collins, *Mark,* 476).

[419] G. Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM Press, 1993) 179

[420] J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 555

[421]Vermes comments on the Lord's prayer, [it] is not meant for recitation by himself, but by a group of disciples" (Vermes, *Religion of Jesus,* 162).

[422] R. Valantasis, *The New Q: A Fresh Translation with Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2005) 123.

[423] Vermes, *Religion of Jesus*, 180

Jesus on the Spirit

Jesus' teaching on the Spirit is sparse, perhaps because his view of the Spirit did not differ radically from that of Second Temple Judaism. As in the OT, the Spirit in the Synoptics inspires the prophets (Ezek 2:2; Luke 1:67, 2:26; cf. Mark 12:36), enables miracles (Judg 14:6; Matt 1:18; Luke 1:35) and is a guiding presence of the anointed (Ps 51:11; Luke 1:41; 10:21).

Perhaps the most significant saying of Jesus regarding the Holy Spirit is his teaching on the unforgiveable sin (Mark 3:28-30; cf. Matt 12:31-12; Luke 12:10). Under any reading of this saying , there is an implied contrast between the Holy Spirit and Jesus[424] and in creating this contrast Jesus consciously elevates the Holy Spirit above himself. The absence of the Father from this saying is telling. The Gospel of Thomas expands the saying, adding "whoever blasphemes against the Father will be forgiven" (GTh 44). This expansion demonstrates the deficiency of the saying when considered in a Trinitarian milieu. Yet the expanded version, whilst preserving the punch-line of the original, seems implausible on the lips of Jesus – is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit worse than blasphemy against the Father? The more likely alternative is that the original saying did not include the Father because the Holy Spirit was identified with God, that is, the power of God.

Jesus on Himself

For our purposes, we are primarily concerned with the ontological claims that Jesus made about himself rather than his religious claims (e.g. the claim to be Messiah). Did Jesus claim to be more than a man? And if so, how did he conceive himself in relation to other supernatural beings; primarily God?

Jesus claims the power to forgive sins "on earth" (Mark 2:10; cf. Matt 9:6; Luke 5:24), not as God,[425] but as "the chief and fully authorized agent of God on earth".[426] The conclusion in *Matthew* that this authority is God-given is the natural corollary of such a claim. Claiming to be "lord" of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28; cf. Matt 12:8; Luke 6:5), Jesus compares himself to David as one with authority to "override conventional interpretations of the will of God".[427] Responding to a question about his authority (Mark 11:27-33), Jesus makes it clear that this authority, like John's, was from heaven. Yet the implication of the centurion (Matt 8:5-13 / Luke 7:1-10; cf. John 4:46-54), which Jesus does not contradict, is that Jesus is *under* authority, i.e. "under God".[428] These passages consistently present Jesus as one with authority *from* God.

Both the claim to be Son of Man and to be Son of God would constitute a claim to be more than a man. The phrase "Son of Man" is one of the best attested aspects of the historical Jesus, being found in all levels of the gospel tradition including *Q, Mark, John* and *Thomas*.[429] It is "beyond reasonable doubt" that this phrase "goes back to Jesus".[430] The most straightforward explanation of this phrase is that Jesus invented the title Son of

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[424] Cf. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 743

[425] *Pace* R. A. Cole, *The Gospel according to Mark* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1989) 121-122

[426] Collins, *Mark,* 187

[427] Collins, *Mark,* 205

[428] C. M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996)217.

[429] Q 6:20-23, 7:31-35, 9:57-62, 11:16, 29-32, 12:8-12, 12:39-40, 17:23-37; Mark 2:10, 28, 8:31, 38, 9:9, 12, 31, 10:33, 45, 13:24, 26, 14:21, 41, 62; John 1:51, 3:13, 14, 5:27, 6:27, 53, 62, 8:28, 9:35, 12:23, 27, 34, 13:31; GTh 86;

[430] Hunter, *Work and Words of Jesus*, 107

Man, directly influenced by Daniel 7 (cf: Q 12:8-12, 39-40, 17:23-37;cf. Mark 8:38, 13:26; cf. Mark 14:62; 1 Thes 4:16-17 [agrapha]; cf. Did 16:1, 7-8).[431]Whilst "Son of Man" is not a synonym for Messiah, either in the gospels (cf. Mark 8:27-29) or in Second Temple Judaism, by alluding to Dan 7:13 Jesus characterises himself as the representative of Israel who comes from/to heaven, surrounded by angels. Whether or not this language was originally symbolic, it was interpreted as referring to the literal coming of Jesus (1 Thes 4:16-17), and it is likely that this interpretation goes back to Jesus himself (cf. Mark 14:61-62; cf. Matt 26:63-64; Luke 22:67-68; Did 16:8).[432]

In the Synoptics, the claim that Jesus was the Son of God is found in the mouth of the Devil (Matt 4:3, 6; Luke 4:3, 9), demons (Matt 8:29; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41), the disciples (Matt 14:33), Jesus' detractors (Matt 26:63, 27:40, 43; Luke 22:70), and God himself (Matt 3:17, 17:5; Mark 1:11, 9:7; Luke 3:22 cf. Mark 12:6; Luke 20:13; 2 Pet 1:17). Mark introduces his gospel with this identification (Mark 1:1). Against Harnack's proposal that the early Christians understood the sonship of Jesus in terms of adoption, it is worth noting that examples of Christian Adoptionism are late[433] and the usual NT texts cited in support do not actually entail adoption (e.g. Acts 2:36, 13:33; Rom 1:3-4). The earliest Christian explanation of the sonship of Jesus is the virgin conception.[434] Only one person, Mary, could testify as to the facts of Jesus' conception and we do not have her testimony, unless it is preserved uncredited in Luke.[435] Jesus' own claim to a filial relationship with God transcends the radical intimacy he advocates for his followers.[436] In the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12:1-9; cf. Matt 21:33-41; Luke 20:9-16; GTh 65), Jesus identifies himself as the son and heir of the vineyard (Israel). Jesus' exchange over Psalm 110 implies that, whilst he identified himself as the son of David, he did not see this as the whole story (Mark 12:35-37);[437] it is perhaps significant that Peter uses the same psalm to draw out the credentials of Jesus over David, i.e. that Jesus ascended into the heavens (Acts 2:34-36).[438]

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[431]B. Chilton, "(The) Son of (the) Man, and Jesus" in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus* (eds. B. Chilton & C. A. Evans; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 281; T. E. Gaston, "The Son of Man", *CEBI* 1:4 (2007) 140-1; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 760; Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, 282; S. J. Gathercole, *The Pre-existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 258).

[432] On the debate over the authenticity of this account see S. J. Patterson, *The God of Jesus: The Historical Jesus & The Search for Meaning* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998) 197n16; J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (HarperCollins, 1993)245-6; B. Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990) 258 (citing John 18:15; J.T. Ta'an 65B.1.68ff; John 1:51); Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 633, citing 2 Sam 7:12-14 following O. Betz, "Die Frage nach dem messianischen Bewusstsein Jesu", *Novum Testamentum 6* (1963).

[433] Neither the Ebionites nor Theodotus of Byzantium were adoptionists with regards to the sonship of Jesus. The Ebionites were Possessionists holding Jesus to be possessed by the Holy Spirit. Theodotus believed in the virgin birth. On Theodotus see T. E. Gaston, "Theodotus of Byzantium", *CEBI*7:1 (2013).

[434] See F. D. Bruner, *Matthew: The Christbook, Matthew 1-12* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 37-39. Either the core narrative (i.e. Jesus was born of a virgin in Bethlehem) is independently attested (four-source hypothesis) or Luke had sufficient reason to retain that core when he redacted Matthew's account (Farrer hypothesis). The irregularity of Jesus' birth is implied in Mark 6:3, Gal 4:4 and John 8:41 (cf. Acts 13:13; Heb 1:5).

[435] Bauckham proposes that Luke owes some of his special material to the testimony of the women, though he proposes Joanna as the most likely candidate (R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 129-131).

[436] Cf. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 716; Witherington, *Christology*, 220;

[437] It has been proposed that Jesus is posing a *haggadah*-question, whereby two seemingly contradictory texts are attempted to be reconciled (C. C. Caragounis, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation* (Mohr Siebeck, 1986) 217; P. M. Head, *Christology and the Synoptic Problem* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997) 178; Witherington, *Christology*, 189-190).

[438] It is possible that v36 implies that Jesus "made" Lord upon his ascension.

In Mark 13:32 (cf. Matt 24:3-6)[439], Jesus again distinguishes himself from the Father, but also presents an apparent hierarchy. "This saying seems to present us with, if not a chain of being, at least an 'ascending line' of closeness of knowledge or relationship to the Father".[440] If Jesus is presenting an ascending hierarchy – men-angels-Son-Father – then the positioning of the Son within this hierarchy is remarkable. Whilst Jesus clearly subordinates himself under the Father, he positions himself above the angels, at least in intimacy, if not in rank. As Witherington concludes, "it takes an exceptional person even to imply this sort of thing".[441]

Jesus on the Trinity

Jesus taught that God was, on the one hand, the OT creator, and on the other, a loving father. There is not a whiff of Platonism here. Jesus probably taught that the Holy Spirit was an impersonal force, identifiable with God. Jesus taught that he himself was the unique son of God with appropriate authority and power, and yet subordinate to God in authority and in being. Jesus' teaching on the Trinity is easily summarised: he doesn't have any. The baptismal formula (Matt 28:19), if authentic, is the only extant saying of Jesus where the Father, Son and Spirit are united (see below).

c. Paul of Tarsus (d.66 AD)

There are two major methodological issues for any consideration of Paul: the reliability of his depiction in *Acts* and the reliability with which texts are ascribed to him.[442]I have accepted the testimony of *Acts*, though not uncritically. I refer to all the Pauline epistles; the Pastorals are only used to corroborate what is justified from other epistles (they are Pauline in character, even if not by Paul himself).

Paul on God

As Dunn writes, Paul's convictions about God are "axiomatic" because they are "common to and shared with his readers".[443] He presents no argument for the existence of God.[444] He also makes little attempt to argue for the superior claims of the Judeo-Christian God over the gods of other religions, excepting his comments about the foolishness of idol worship (Rom 1:22-23; 1 Cor 8:4, 12:2; cf. Acts 17:29-30). Paul shares with Second Temple Judaism an exclusive monotheism (1 Cor 8:4[445]; cf. Eph 4:6;

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[439] Ignorance of the timing of the parousia is a common theme throughout the extant teaching of Jesus (cf. Mark 13:34-37; Matt 24:42-51, 25:1-13; 14-30 [esp. "after a long time" 25:19]; Luke 21:34-36; Acts 1:7; 1 Thes 5:1-6).

[440] Witherington, *Christology*, 232. Witherington proposes that the apparent ignorance and subordination of Jesus may be paralleled in Wisdom.

[441] Witherington, *Christology*, 232.

[442] See J. W. Drane, "Paul" in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (eds. B. M. Metzger & M. D. Coogan; OUP, 1993) 578; M. Hooker, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM, 1977) 24-27; J. A. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 1983)7; E. E. Ellis, "Paul" in *New Bible Dictionary* (3rd ed.; Leicester: IVP, 1996) 885-6.

[443] Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 28-9.

[444] Rom 1:20-21 is more a statement about the self-evidency of God's existence rather than an attempt to argue for that conclusion.

[445] Regarding 1 Cor 8:6, Bauckham has claimed that "the only possible way to understand Paul as maintaining monotheism is to understand him to be including Jesus in the unique identity of the one God affirmed in the Shema" (R. Bauckham, *God Crucified* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 38). Yet here Bauckham has overstated his case. Given that Paul uses the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ" on 47 other occasions (exc. 1 Tim 6:3, 14), it is unlikely that here it should be interpreted as YHWH (Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity*, 37). If Paul had divided *elohim* and YHWH between two persons then it would destroy the Shema, presenting God (*elohim*) as someone or something separate from YHWH.

Gal 3:20; Rom 3:30; cf. 1 Tim 1:17; 2:5; 6:15-16). God is not parochial but universal (Rom 3:29-30; cf. Acts 17:26-27).

Another "taken-for-granted of Paul's theology" is the role of God as creator (Rom 1:20, 25). This act of creation is that described in Genesis, creation by word (2 Cor 4:6).[446] Paul alludes frequently to the Genesis account (cf. Gen 1:26-27/1 Cor 11:7; Eph 4:24; Gen 2:7/1 Cor 15:45; Gen 2:24/1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31; etc.). Significantly, for Paul the creation is temporal (cf. Eph 1:4) and is good (cf. Rom 14:14; 1 Cor 10:26).[447]

Paul identifies the one God as the Father (1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6). Paul believes God to be the Father of Jesus and the begetter of all mankind, but he also writes of a familial relationship between God and believers. Through faith (Gal 3:26) and through the Spirit (Rom 8:14), believers have become children of God. The intimacy of this relationship is captured in the cry of believers "Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). Addressing God as "Abba" is a tradition that is likely to have originated with Jesus and that Paul advocates for believers in their experience of "a familiar relationship to God".[448] This relationship speaks of God's immanence (cf. Acts 17:27).

Paul on Jesus

Paul believes that Jesus of Nazareth was not only raised from the dead but was taken into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God (Rom 8:34; Phil 2:9; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1); Paul believes that he received a vision of the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:8; Acts 9:1-9; cf. Gal 1:15-16). This conviction was shared by early Christians (cf. Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-4; 5:31; 7:55-6; 1 Pet 3:22) and may, arguably, be found in the sayings of Jesus (cf. Mark 12:36 and pars; Mark 14:62 and pars). Sitting to the side of a throne implies subordination (cf. 1 Kgs 2:19; Ps 45:9; Matt 20:21) and Paul believes Christ is subject to God (1 Cor 15:28); whatever praise Christ receives in his exalted state, it is "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:11). There are numerous examples in pre-Christian Judaism of humans being taken up into heaven. The exaltation of Jesus, though distinctive in Christian thought, did not imply any confusion or conflation between Christ and God. Dunn writes, "Jewish monotheistic faith could accommodate the ideas of one highly exalted, without (apparently) any thought that Jewish monotheism was compromised or would have to be rethought".[449] For Paul, the reason Jesus was exalted is so that Jesus can make intercession to God on behalf of believers (Rom 8:34; cf. 1 Tim 2:5).

Some scholars believe Paul taught the personal pre-existence of Jesus. Notably Phil 2:5-11 is read as describing the choice made by Jesus prior to his incarnation. This ignores the significance of Adam in Paul's Christology (Rom 5:12ff; 1 Cor 15:22, 45).[450] When Paul describes one made in the image of God being tempted by equality with God, the allusions to Adam are there to be seen. This Adam Christology stresses the significance of Christ's humanity.

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[446] D. Guthrie & R. P. Martin, "God" in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (eds. G. F. Hawthorne & R. P. Martin; Leicester: IVP, 1993) 356

[447] Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 39

[448] Guthrie & Martin, "God", 356; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 48

[449] Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 253

[450] J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM Press, 1989); Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 283-6; cf. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity*, 45. Bauckham considers Dunn's thesis to have "proved a red herring" (Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 41; cf. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 121n98).

Another possible indicator of personal pre-existence might be found in the apparent ascriptions of a creative role to Jesus. There are two passages. The first, 1 Cor 8:6, contrasts God "from" whom all things come with Jesus "through" (διά) whom all things come. Διά can refer to causality or purpose, as well as instrumentality, and this phrase might not entail the agency (or even the presence) of Christ in creation. In the second passage, Col 1:15-20, the language of creation is explicit. It might be argued that this passage should be understood as part of Paul's new creation discourse, the extended metaphor for the formation of the body of believers in Jesus Christ. The advantage of this reading is that it does justice to the context, which is about reconciliation, and makes better sense of items of creation being listed as "thrones or dominions or principalities or powers", which are not parts of the Genesis creation but are used by Paul about the church (cf. Eph 3:10, 6:12; Col 2:10). Nevertheless, I think there is a compelling case for preferring Wisdom as the primary reference of this passage (cf. 1 Cor 1:24).[451] If this is the case, then Paul is identifying Jesus with a personified abstract; an extended metaphor.[452] Paul clearly did not understand Wisdom as a literal person, else the change in gender from female to male might have been problematic. Paul happily combines the feminine *sophia* with the masculine pronoun (1 Cor 1:30). Paul takes the extended metaphor, presumably known so well to his readers, and sees it embodied in Christ. The Gentiles seek after the wisdom of world, but God has made the wisdom of world foolish by confounding their expectations and sending Christ to be crucified. Christ then appears as foolishness to the Gentiles, but to believers he has become the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:20-25, 30-31). The wisdom that is hidden from the world was revealed in Christ (1 Cor 2:7-8).

Paul on Spirit

The Greek word πνεῦμα has a broad semantic field, including "wind", "breath", "life", "soul", "influence" and at times is related to νοῦς (cf. LXX). This breadth of possible meanings is evidenced in Paul's writings. Πνεῦμα is sometimes synonymous with mind (1 Cor 2:11; Phil 1:27), sometimes not (1 Cor 14:14-15); sometimes it is synonymous with soul (1 Cor 5:5) and sometimes not (1 Cor 15:45; 1 Thes 5:23). It is clearly distinct from the body (1 Cor 7:34; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Thes 5:23). Paul also uses πνεῦμα for the influence or transference of people (Eph 2:2; cf 1 Cor 2:12; Col 2:8, 20); he talks about being absent in body but present in spirit (1 Cor 5:3; Col 2:5). Such are the complexities of Paul's use of πνεῦμα that some caution is needed when interpreting it.[453]

In one sense, the Spirit of God relates to God as the spirit of a man relates to that man (1 Cor 2:11). Yet the Spirit of God is also something more; following OT usage, the Spirit is the power (Rom 15:13, 19; 1 Cor 2:4) and presence (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:22) of God in the world.[454] In this sense, the Spirit of God is God. The identification is made explicitly

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[451]Cf. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 269; "image of God" (Wis 7:26; Philo, Leg.All. 1.43); "firstborn" (Prov 8:22, 25; Philo, Ebr. 30-31, Qu. Gen. 4.97); "made all things through wisdom" (Ps 104:24; Prov 3:18; Wis 9:2; Philo, Det. 54); "before all things" (Sir 1:4); holds all things together (Wis 1:6-7; cf. Sir 43:26). Cf. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity,* 34

[452] cf. Dunn, *Theology of Paul,* 35, 270. The temptation needs to be resisted to describe Wisdom as a hypostasis or emanation from God; as Dunn says, this is "anachronistic and imposes a distinction which, so far as we can tell, never occurred to first century Jews" (Dunn, *Theology of Paul,* 272). Regarding claims that Wisdom was a goddess of the ancient Israelites or that the ancients were unable to distinguish personified abstracts from divine beings, see T. Gaston, "Wisdom and the Goddess", CEBI 2:1 (2008).

[453]See N. Richardson, *Paul's Language about God* (JSNT Sup 99; Sheffield Academic Press, 1994)

[454] T. Paige, "Holy Spirit" in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (eds. G. F. Hawthorne & R. P. Martin; Leicester: IVP, 1993) 404; Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity,* 47

2 Cor 3:17-18, alluding to Ex 34:34.[455] Paul says that the Spirit "so clearly at work in the new Christian dispensation", is the same Lord "of whom the Jewish Scriptures speak".[456]

This identification between God and the Spirit is somewhat complicated in Paul by the way in which he relates the Spirit to Christ. The use of the expression "Spirit of Christ" as an apparent synonym for "Spirit of God" (Rom 8:9) is potentially confusing,[457]were not the explanation of the expression given in the following verse, where Paul talks about Christ being in believers. The implication is that the Spirit of Christ is Christ, in much the same way that the Spirit of God is God. Other claims that Paul identified Christ and the Spirit are unconvincing.[458] This very question of how Christ relates to the Spirit is symptomatic of the prevailing hermeneutic that considers the Spirit to be something distinct and distinguishable. Those who read Paul as having a latent trinitarianism are therefore at pains to stress that the Son and the Spirit are distinct identities.[459] Even those without such presuppositions feel compelled to ask how these two identities relate to one another.[460] But if we remove the concept of the Spirit as a distinct identity, then the problem disappears; no-one troubles to ask whether the love of God and the love of Christ should be identified.

Triads in Paul

It goes without saying that there is no explicit Trinity in the writings of Paul; he has no use for the term or the concept.[461] He does provide a number of verses which can be read through Trinitarian lenses by later readers. Dunn provides a list of such verses (Rom 8:9-11, 1 Cor 12:4-6, 2 Cor 1:21-22, 13:13; Gal 4:6, 2Thes 2:13; also see 1 Cor 1:4-7; Eph 4:4-6);[462] Guthrie and Martin provide another list (1 Cor 12:3-7; Eph 1:3-14, 2:18; 4:4-6; Tit 3:4-6; cf. 2 Cor 13:13-14; also see Gal 4:4-6; Rom 8:1-4; 2 Thes 2:13-14; Tit 3:4-6);[463] Gabriel acknowledges only three passages as "explicitly triadic" (2 Cor 13:14; 1 Cor 12:4-6; Eph 4:4-6).[464] If we exclude those passages where there is no clear triad in view (1 Cor 1:4-7; 2 Cor 1:21-22; Eph 1:3-14, 2:18, 4:4-6) and those where "spirit" is clearly synonymous for God (Rom 8:1-4; 2 Thes 2:13-14; Tit 3:4-6) or Christ (Rom 8:9-11; Gal 4:4-6), then we are left with only two passages that warrant consideration.

In 1 Cor 12:4-6, Paul lists three, and only three constituents together, but nothing is implied about the ontological relationship between the three constituents. In this context

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[455] The use of δὲ indicates interpretative glosses on OT quotations (Richardson, *Paul's Language,* 156). Cf. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity*, 46

[456] Richardson, *Paul's Language,* 157

[457] Cf. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 433

[458] The phrase "Spirit of Christ" (Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19) does not refer to some relationship between the Holy Spirit and Christ (*pace* Gabriel, "Pauline Pneumatology", 355-6); the spirit of Christ is analogous to the spirit of Paul, present whilst he is physically absent. 2 Cor 3:17 identifies the work of God in the OT with the outpouring of the Spirit amongst Paul's contemporaries; the Spirit is not identified as Christ. Context requires that 1 Cor 15:45 be read as spirit, rather than Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 15:44, 47; *pace* Dunn, *Theology of Paul,* 261; cf. A. Gabriel, "Pauline Pneumatology and Trinitarian Presuppositions" in *Paul and His Theology* (ed. S. E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 359-360; Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity,* 47).

[459] R. C. Fay, "Was Paul a Trinitarian? A Look at Romans 8" in *Paul and His Theology* (ed. S. E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2006) 343

[460] Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity*, 48; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 264

[461] "Paul did not use the explicit terminology that would later characterise the historic conflict within the early church" (Fay, "Was Paul a Trinitarian?", 343).

[462] Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 263

[463] Guthrie & Martin, "God", 366

[464]Gabriel, "Pauline Pneumatology", 351

the inclusion of the "same Spirit" is required as the question at hand is the diversity of spiritual gifts. The inclusion of "same God" is unsurprising in this context. The inclusion of "same Lord" is required by the context because Paul is seeking to distinguish the Christian manifestations of the Spirit, by which one can say "Jesus is Lord", from non-Christian manifestations, where one might say "Jesus is accursed" (1 Cor 12:3). Paul is here equating the unity of Spirit-manifestations with the unity of the followers of Christ. Though this passage may be read triadically, one would not need to be a Trinitarian to write these things.

In 2 Cor 13:13-14, Paul elaborates his usual benediction (Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 16:23; Phil 4:23; 1 Thes 5:28; 2 Thes 3:18; cf. Gal 6:18; Philem 1:25) with extra clauses.[465] This is not a standard liturgical formulation, but is prompted by context. Given that the final clause should be read as an objective genitive,[466] it is unlikely that Paul is listing three persons. As Furnish indicates, none of these virtues are uniquely associated with one person; God's love can be referred to as Christ's love (2 Cor 5:14) or the Spirit's love (Rom 15:30); participation can be in Christ (1 Cor 1:9).[467] The three clauses of this verse were chosen for rhetorical convenience rather than for delineating a broader theological scheme.

d. Johannine Literature (c.90)

For our purposes, the identity of the author(s) of the Johannine Literature need not concern us. I will consider the canonical gospel and epistles ascribed to John as a single body of literature; I have not included *Revelation* in this analysis. For convenience I will call the author "John".[468]

John on God

The God of John is the God of the Jews (8:41), but the Jews have not known him (8:54-55) because they have not received Jesus. God is the OT creator (1:1-5,10), and the God of Abraham (8:40f), Moses (5:46) and the prophets (6:45). But he is also the God of many nations (cf. 11:52). "Father" is John's most common designation for God, though usually limited to his relationship with Jesus (1:18; 3:33; 5:17).[469] The fatherhood of God in relation to believers is clearly distinguished from that to Jesus (cf. 20:17); believers are τέκνα of God – Jesus is the μονογενές υἱός (cf. 1:14; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9).[470]

John affirms that there is only one God (5:44; 17:3), yet he also asserts the unity of God and Jesus (10:30). This should be understood as a unity in the sense of fellowship (10:38; 17:11, 21-23) and not confused for an ontological claim – a confusion ascribed to "the Jews" (cf. 10:32-36).

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[465] Gabriel, "Pauline Pneumatology", 351; V. P. Furnish, *The Anchor Bible: II Corinthians* (New York: Doubleday, 1984) 587;

[466] Elsewhere Paul uses *koinonia* as an objective genitive (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1973)344; citing 1 Cor 10:16; Phil 3:10; Rom 15:27; Phil 2:1; Philem 6). We find examples of grace being given or manifest by Christ, love being given or exercised by God, but none of *koinonia* being given by the Spirit.

[467] Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 587. Both Dunn and Paige identify the shared experience of the Spirit as fellowship in Christ (Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 424; Paige, "Holy Spirit", 407)

[468] For a useful summary of the issue surrounding authorship see J. Van der Watt, *An Introduction to the Johannine Gospel and Letters* (London: T&T Clark, 2007) 110-3.

[469] M. M. Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001) 57

[470] Van der Watt, *Johannine Gospel*, 34; Thompson, *God of John*, 58, 70. John 1:18 either reads μονογενές θεὸς or μονογενές υἱός; both variants are well attested.

John places greater emphasis on the transcendence of God than any other NT writer. God is invisible, or at the very least, unseen (1:18; 5:37; 1 Jn 4:12, 20): John records one telling incident where God speaks from heaven and many of the crowd hear only thunder (12:28-9).[471] In contrast, Jesus has been seen and so can reveal God (cf. 1:18) – to see Jesus is, in this sense, to see the Father (14:7-11). Jesus mediates access to the Father (14:6). This is not to say that God is unknowable, but that men come to know God through Jesus.[472]

John on Jesus

John opens his gospel with a prologue regarding Word (λόγος) and, regardless of whether it predates the composition of the gospel, it was specifically chosen by John to introduce his gospel and thus may be read as the interpretative key to his Christology.[473] The Semitic character of the gospel makes it unlikely that John's Logos is an allusion to the Stoic or Platonic Logos, and there are more than sufficient Jewish precedents (Gen 1:1-3;[474] OT *dabar;* Targumic *memra*).[475] There are significant parallels with Jewish Wisdom literature, where Wisdom is identified as Word (Sirah 24:3; Wisdom 9:1-2; cf. Philo): John may have preferred λόγος as a masculine noun. John's description of the Word as the agent or catalyst of creation (1:2-3); as coming to men and being received by them (1:10-13) and even being called "God" (1:1), are not revolutionary or scandalous in the context of Second Temple Judaism (especially when compared with Philo). Before verse 14 John has not said anything that a first century Jew would not say "amen" to. It is the incarnation or embodiment of Word/Wisdom that was new. Given that prior to John, Wisdom was a personified abstract, we should perhaps expect John's Logos to be the same.[476] Elsewhere when Jesus identifies himself as "the light of the world" (8:12; cf. 12:46), John retains the masculine pronoun, but here he identifies the Word as "the light of men" using the neuter pronoun (1:5). This contrast implies that Jesus had no personal pre-existence. If the prologue is the interpretative key to John's Christology,[477] then when John includes in his gospel the statements of Jesus that he descended from heaven (John 3:13, 27) and that he was from above (John 3:31, 8:23), is he adding anything to his declaration that Jesus is the Word made flesh?

If μονογενές (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9) implies a born son in contrast to the adopted children of God (1:12; 1 Jn 3:1-2), then it might presuppose the virgin conception.

The Gospel of John contains some of the most explicitly subordinationist statements in the whole NT (5:19; cf. 5:30, 8:28, 14:28). God is the sender; Jesus is the sent (3:34; 4:34; 5:23-24, 30, 36; 6:29, 38, 57; 7:16; 8:18, 42; 9:4; 11:42, etc.).[478]Jesus recognises that everything comes from God, his Father (17:7), including his mission (5:36; 17:4;

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[471] Thompson, *God of John*, 104
[472] Thompson, *God of John*, 101
[473] M. Hengel, "The Prologue of the Gospel of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth", in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (eds. R. Bauckham & C. Mosser; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008) 268
[474] Bauckham writes that this is allusion is sufficient to establish John's meaning. He concludes that by identifying the creative word with Jesus, John distinguishes Jesus from anything created and includes him in the divine identity (R. Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple* (Baker Academic, 2007)241)
[475] Hengel, "Prologue", 273;
[476]*Pace* Hengel, "Prologue", 272; Bauckham, *Beloved Disciple*, 241-2
[477] Hengel, "Prologue", 268
[478] Van der Watt, *Johannine Gospel*, 36

18:11); his words (7:16, 17:8); his disciples (6:39; 10:29; 17:9); his power and authority (5:26-27; 10:18; 17:2) and his glory (17:22-24). Those passages which seem to proclaim the unity and equality of the Son with the Father are qualified by John's subordinationism (cf. 1:18; 5:19f; 10:31-38).[479] He repeatedly declares that the Father is greater than the Son (10:29; 14:28), recognising that the one who is sent is not greater than the one who sent him (13:16). The gospel stresses Jesus' humanity – Jesus hungers, thirsts, eats, drinks, weeps, is troubled, is exhausted and ultimately dies (4:6-7, 11:35, 19:30);[480] the epistles reject doceticism as anti-Christ (1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 1:7).[481] Yet the humanity of Jesus is not the complete explanation of his subordination,[482] nor is it analogous to the "messianic secret",[483] as the subordination is found in the prologue (cf. 1:18). When John makes free to reveal the purpose of his gospel, it is this: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31). Subordinationism results from a real and significant distinction that John saw between God and Jesus[484] - it is only "the Jews" who thought that Jesus was claiming to be God (5:17-18; 10:30-33).

It is often argued that 8:57-58 is a clear indication of divinity;[485] many translations capitalize 'I AM' to emphasise the point. However, it is improbable that ἐγώ ειμι functions as a name[486] and in Greek renderings of Ex3:14 the divine name is ὁ ὤν (LXX; Philo; Josephus).[487]The meaning of ἐγώ ειμι when used without predicate is determined by the context[488] and in this context ἐγώ ειμι refers to the Son of Man (8:28).[489]

John on Spirit

In John 4:24 Jesus says, "God is spirit". Πνεῦμα here does not mean "absolute being"[490] or God's activity (cf. 1 John 1:5, 4:8),[491] but contrasts the divine spirit with the human spirit, from which true worship comes. The pertinent question is whether this spirit (= God), is the Holy Spirit.

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[479] C. K. Barrett, *Essays on John* (London: SPCK, 1982) 23-25

[480] Van der Watt, *Johannine Gospel*, 48

[481] John does not explain explicitly why doceticism is so problematic, though it is probable that he thought the humanity of Jesus was necessary for him to provide expiation for sin (1 John 2:2; cf. Heb 2:9, 17-18; 4:15).

[482] Barrett, *Essays on John*, 26-27; Hengel, "Prologue", 269

[483] Barrett, *Essays on John*, 30-32

[484]Many scholars draw attention to the fact that Jesus is called "God" several times in the Johannine literature (1:1; 1:18; 20:28; 1 John 5:20). However, one is reference to the preincarnate Word (1:1; see above), another is textually difficult (1:18), and a third is grammatically and textually suspect (1 John 5:20). This leaves John 20:28 and the assumption that when Thomas exclaims "My Lord and my God" he means to identify Jesus as God. This is in contrast to the explicit statements distinguishing Jesus from God (cf. John 17:3).

[485]R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols; Doubleday, 1970) 1:367; J. N. Sanders & B. A. Mastin, *A Commentary on the Gospel according St John* (London: Blacks, 1968) 236n.

[486]"It would mean that ego would have to be both subject and predicate!" (R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Westminister John Knox Press, 1971) 327n; cf. Thompson, *God of John*, 92)

[487] Bauckham, *Beloved Disciple*, 246; Thompson, *God of John*, 89

[488] C. H. Williams, "'I am' or 'I am he'?: Self-Declaratory Pronouncements in the Fourth Gospel and Rabbinic Tradition" in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (eds. R. T. Fortna & T. Thatcher; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) 344, citing 2 Sam 2:20 LXX; Mark 14:42; John 9:9; Test. Job 29:4; 31:6; cf. b. Ketibbot 63a (Aramaic)

[489]Bauckham rejects the idea that *ego eimi* here could mean "I am the Son of Man" declaring such a meaning "too enigmatic" but there is no other available predicate for ἐγώ ειμι in the passage (Bauckham, *Beloved Disciple*, 245).

[490]*Pace* C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1954) 226.

[491] G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Word Biblical Commentary 36; Waco: Word Books, 1987) 62.

John speaks about the Holy Spirit in two different ways: as the power of God and as the Paraclete.[492] Regarding the former, John describes the Spirit as something that prompts utterances (1 Jn 4:1-6; cf. John 3:34, 6:63) and as the divine presence in the hearts of believers (1 Jn 3:24; 4:13; cf. John 7:37-9). The Spirit is something that is given (3:34) and received (20:22); something to be baptized with (1:32-33) and born of (3:5-8).[493]

In the Farewell Discourse, Jesus promises the coming of the Paraclete, who is identified as the Holy Spirit (14:26) and the Spirit of truth (14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13), and who is explicitly personified. [494] The Paraclete teaches (14:26), guides (16:13) and declares (16:14-15): he brings to remembrance the words of Jesus (14:26); he convicts the world of sin (16:8); he glorifies Jesus (16:14). These are personal actions that are being ascribed to the Spirit. Yet whilst *parakleton* is a masculine noun, John uses the neuter pronoun (14:17).

It is sometimes proposed that Jesus is the Paraclete (cf. 1 Jn 2:1; John 14:18), but Jesus is explicit that he will "send" the Paraclete (16:7). The descriptions of the Paraclete find precedent in the descriptions of Michael in the Qumran texts,[495] but in John the Paraclete is identified as the Holy Spirit, not an angel. The function of the Paraclete is defined as a function of God, the abiding presence of God (and Jesus) within believers (14:23; 1 Jn 3:24).[496] Comparing the activities ascribed to the Paraclete and to the Father corroborates this conclusion; both testify to Jesus, both glorify Jesus, both abide with believers and both condemn the world. As Thompson concludes, "John could speak of the work of God and the work of the Spirit as interchangeable".[497]

Triads in John

Whilst John has a "high" Christology, there is no Trinity in his writings. He writes of the threefold witness of the Spirit, the water and the blood, which "agree as one" (1 Jn 5:8); it must have been an irresistible temptation for the Latin Fathers[498] to add the Johannine Comma to their commentaries and the margins of their NT manuscripts (cf. 1 John 5:7 [NKJV]).[499] But John even passes over opportunities to present a triadic formula (John 17:3, 21); "John has more to say about the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son and disciple than he does the Father, Son and Spirit".[500]

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[492] Thompson, *God of John*, 146-9

[493] Thompson notes John's silence about many activities usually assigned to the Spirit, including: filling, being poured out, driving, exorcising demons and inspiring prophecy (Thompson, *God of John*, 156-8).

[494] Van der Watt, *Johannine Gospel*, 72

[495] Thompson, *God of John*, 180

[496] Beasley-Murray resists this conclusion arguing that the whole context of 14:18-25 is the Parousia, not the coming of the Paraclete (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 260-1). Yet Jesus' remarks in 14:23 are made in response to Judas' question "how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" (14:22). The point of the Parousia is to manifest Jesus to the world, whereas Jesus is explicit that the Paraclete cannot be received by the world (14:17).

[497] Thompson, *God of John*, 183

[498] The Comma is only attested in the Latin version (not Vulgate), and the few Greek witnesses seem dependent on the Latin text.

[499] Scholars are "virtually unanimous" that the Johannine Comma is a later addition (cf. R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (YUP, 1995)776).

[500] D. Crump, "Re-examining the Johannine Trinity: perichoresis or deification?",*Scottish Journal of Theology* 59 (2006) 398. The Father is never said to indwell the Spirit, nor the Spirit indwell the Father. Jesus is never said to indwell the Spirit; the Spirit does descend on Jesus (1:32) and is given to Jesus (3:34). The Spirit dwells within the disciple (14:17), but the disciple is never said to indwell the Spirit. Yet the disciples do indwell both Father and Son. "Disciples are said to enjoy the very relationship that the

e. Ignatius of Antioch (c.115)

The martyrdom of Ignatius is conventionally dated, on the testimony of Eusebius, to the mid-reign of Trajan (c. 110-117). Three recessions of the Ignatian letters are extant, known as "long" (including six others letters), "short" (extant in Syrian only) and "middle"; scholarly consensus accepts the latter as authentic.[501]

Ignatius on God

Ignatius affirms Jewish monotheism, writing that the Jewish prophets "lived according to Jesus Christ" and convinced the "disobedient" that "there is one God" (Ign. *Mag* 8:2). This one God "manifested himself through Jesus Christ his Son" (cf. Ign. *Eph* 19:3).[502] It is possible that Ignatius' monotheism is one of the motivating concerns in his apparent monoepiscopacy.[503] He describes God as "bishop of all" (Ign. *Mag* 3:1) and Jesus as his servant (Ign. *Mag* 7:1; cf. Ign. *Mag* 13:2; Ign. *Phild* 7:2; Ign. *Smyr* 8:1).[504] The implication is a hierarchy, both ecclesiastical and divine, with God at the top.

Schoedel writes that "Ignatius' God is not vividly personal".[505] We begin to see in Ignatius negative attributes ascribed to God. In Ign. *Poly* 3:2, a passage referring to Jesus' present condition awaiting the Parousia, Ignatius describes the divine nature as timeless [ἀχρονον], invisible [ἀόρατον], untouchable [ἀψηλάφητον] and impassible [ἀπαθῆ]. In Ign. *Eph* 7:2, also describing Jesus ("God come in flesh"), we find "unborn" [ἀγένητος]. The term "invisible" is already present in the writings of Paul (cf. Rom 1:20; Col 1:15), but others have Hellenistic origin. Yet Ignatius does not use this language to emphasise the transcendent nature of God, but rather to express the apparent paradox of God manifest in flesh. Though Ignatius praises silence (Ign. *Phild* 1:1; Ign. *Eph* 6:1, 15:1), it is unlikely that Ignatius identified God as Silence (Σιγή):[506]we do not find expressed "the *Deus absconditus*".[507]

Ignatius on Jesus

One thing that distinguishes Ignatius from those who preceded him is his boldness in calling Jesus "God" (θεός), which he does on several occasions.[508] This may not be common designation[509] – Polycarp does not use it – and we should be cautious of over-interpreting the use of such a designation. The occasions where the designation is used do *not* allow us to assume that "under all conditions he thought of Christ as God", or that

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Holy Spirit does not" (401). Crump is clear that this triadic perichoresis including the disciple does not imply the deification of the disciple (409-10).

[501] For critical text and English translation of the letter of Ignatius see B. D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Loeb; London: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[502] Schoedel worries that this passage is "close to modalism", supposing that the "gracious gift" that inspired the prophets was from Jesus; in fact, the preceding verse makes it clear that it is "God's gracious gift" (Ign. *Mag* 8:1). Cf. Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 120

[503] P. Foster, "The Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch (Part 2)", *The Expository Times* 118:1 (2006) 2.

[504] The analogy is not consistently used, elsewhere Jesus "alone will oversee [ἐπισκοπήσει]" the church at Antioch and God is to "shepherd" (Ign. *Rom* 9:1), and Polycarp has both God and Jesus as his bishop (Ign. *Poly* sal).

[505] Schoedel, *Ignatius* ,18

[506] Ign.*Mag* 8:2 says that the Word proceeded "from silence" but there is no indication that Ignatius intended to identify God as Silence.

[507] Barnard, "Background of Ignatius", 202

[508] "our God" (Ign. *Eph* 15:3, 18:2; *Rom* intro; *Rom* 3:3; *Poly* 8:3); "my God" (Ign. *Rom* 6:3); "Jesus Christ, the God who made you so wise" (Ign. *Smyr* 1:1);. The double genitive in Ign. *Smyr* 10:1 allows two rendings, as in Ehrman: "Christ of God [or Christ, who is God]".

[509]*Pace* Foster, "Ignatius 2", 5-6

"θεός stands for God the Father and Jesus Christ together".[510] Ignatius never designates Jesus as "God" in an unqualified way; usually he is "our God", which implies "a function distinct from God simply as God".[511] When using θεός without qualification, he is referencing God alone. Richardson explains this qualified use of θεός for Jesus as a natural development for Gentile Christians, given the wide semantic field of θεός in Greek. "Once Christ was called 'Lord' ... to the Gentile Christians there would be little difficulty in predicating him with 'God'".[512]

Repudiating docetic Christology, Ignatius emphasises the conception of Jesus. He was born a man that he might suffer (Ign. *Eph* 18:2). He was the product of two natures (Ign. *Smyr* 1:1),[513] "from both Mary and God" (Ign. *Eph* 7:2; cf. 18:2, 20:2). Ignatius, then, is more explicit even than the NT infancy narratives that Jesus was "conceived" [ἐκυοφορήθη] by the mingling of two natures. His mention of "the divine plan that leads to the new person Jesus Christ" (Ign. *Eph* 20:1) would seem to indicate the virgin conception as the temporal beginning of Jesus.[514] He was "first subject to suffering and then beyond suffering" (Ign.*Eph* 7:2), implying that Jesus only became impassible after his resurrection.[515] Only in one passage does Ignatius explicitly refer to pre-existence; "who was with the Father before the ages" (Ign.*Mag* 6:1). Here Ignatius may be referring to Wisdom (1 Cor 2:7; cf. 2 Tim 1:9; Tit 1:2) or to the familiar Christian concept of Jesus existing in the foreknowledge of God (1 Pet 1:20; cf. *Herm. Sim.*9.12.2-3; Irenaeus, AH1.10.3). It seems improbable that Ignatius, in calling Jesus "Word" [λόγος] (Ign. *Mag* 8:2), is not referring either directly to the Johannine prologue or to a cognate Christian tradition. "Nothing is said of his agency in creation".[516]

Ignatius consistently subordinates Jesus to his Father; [517]"he always stands in a place secondary and inferior to him".[518] Christ followed his Father (Ign. *Smyr* 8:1), imitated his Father (Ign. *Philad* 7:2), did nothing apart from his Father (Ign. *Mag* 7:1) and was submissive to his Father (Ign. *Mag* 13:2).[519] This subordinationism also seems apparent in the metaphors used to describe Christ's relationship to God. Christ is the door, altar, mouth, word and will of God.[520] Jesus is the means by which believers gain access to

[510]*Pace* C. C. Richardson, *The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch* (Columbia University Press, 1935)40
[511] Schoedel, *Ignatius* ,22
[512] Richardson, *Christianity of Ignatius*, 43
[513] The expression "according to the flesh" might be taken to imply adoptionism (Schoedel, *Ignatius* ,20), were he not explicit elsewhere that Jesus was born of a virgin.
[514] Ign. *Eph* 7:2 describes Jesus as both "born and unborn", which might be taken to pre-empt post-Nicene ideas of Jesus as "born, but not begotten". However, the reference here is more likely to his dual origins, "from both Mary and God".
[515] Corwin counters that in Ign. *Poly* 3:2 "impassible" is noted first (V. Corwin, *St Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch* (YUP, 1960) 93) but this passage refers to Christ post-ascension and so does not decide the question. Ehrman renders this phrase "the one who is invisible, who became visible for us", adding "became". The Greek simply says τον δι᾽ημᾶς ὁρατὸν, literally "the one who is visible for us".
[516] Richardson, *Christianity of Ignatius,* 41. McGuckin has suggested that Ignatius may have viewed the Son as "indistinguishable" from God prior to the incarnation, "after which point the 'sonship' was manifested historically" (J. A. McGuckin, "Christ: The Apostolic Fathers to the Third Century", in *The Routledge Companion to Early Christian Thought* (ed. D. J. Bingham; London: Routledge, 2010) 261).
[517] Schoedel writes "appearances are probably deceiving in this regard" (Schoedel, *Ignatius,*20) but it is not clear what reason we have to suspect Ignatius of being misleading.
[518] Richardson, *Christianity of Ignatius*, 44
[519] The phrase "according to the flesh" here might imply that Christ was only subordinate during his life on earth. Schoedel thinks that this phrase "looks suspiciously like an addition made by an interpolator bent on eliminating any suggestion of subordinationism in the text" (Schoedel, *Ignatius,* 131).
[520] Richardson, *Christianity of Ignatius*, 42

God; he is, in this sense, an intermediary. Jesus is not God, but God manifested (Ign.*Mag* 8:2; Ign.*Eph* 19:3) - he is the knowledge of God (Ign.*Eph* 17:2; cf. Ign.*Eph* 3:2). Schoedel explains this concept by arguing that the transcendence of God in Ignatius gave the need for intermediaries.[521] This is misleading as it implies that for Ignatius the problem was how a transcendent God could interact with the world. Jesus had to be passible so that he could suffer for believers, but Jesus also had to reveal God to men. For Ignatius this problem was resolved in the composite nature of Christ.

Ignatius on the Spirit

As Corwin writes, "there is a paucity of references to the Spirit, and what there are show neither clarity nor originality".[522] Ignatius talks more often of the dichotomy between flesh and spirit; in some letters he does not mention the Holy Spirit at all. This observation reminds us that Ignatius was not innovating or speculating; the Holy Spirit is not an issue that he feels needs clarification or repudiation. As such, we should not be surprised if what he does say about the Holy Spirit differs little from the NT.[523]

Ignatius believes the Holy Spirit has a role in the inspiration of the prophets (Ign.*Mag* 9:2; cf.Ign.*Phild* 7:1-2), in church appointments (Ign.*Phild* sal) and in the lives of believers (Ign.*Eph* 9:1). In describing the Spirit as "the cable", Ignatius seems to identify the Spirit as an instrument rather than a person. Suggestions that Ignatius sometimes conflates Christ and the Spirit are unconvincing.[524] The Spirit "comes from God" (Ign.*Phild* 7:1). The coupling "according to the plan of God" with "from the Holy Spirit" regarding the conception of Jesus "indicates that Ignatius probably thinks of the Holy Spirit as God",[525] or, more precisely, he thinks of the Holy Spirit as the power of God (cf. Luke 1:35).

Triads in Ignatius

Of the three triadic statements found in the Ignatian letters, none constitutes an ontological triad. The metaphor of the construction of the temple (Ign.*Eph* 9:1) lists a number of referents, so is not strictly speaking triadic. Were we to force an ontological significance, we would necessarily assume that the Father alone is God (the object of the temple), whilst both Jesus and the Spirit function as intermediaries.[526] The inclusion of the Spirit in Ign.*Mag* 13:1 is disruptive, perhaps indicating that it is not original.[527] If the phrase is authentic, either the formula was so significant to Ignatius that he included it "even when by doing so the rhythm was destroyed";[528] or since his rhetorical purposes took precedence, the triad was "of secondary importance to him".[529] The inclusion of the

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[521] Schoedel, *Ignatius* ,20
[522] Corwin, *St Ignatius*, 141
[523] Cf. Schoedel, *Ignatius* ,20
[524]Cf. Corwin, *Ignatius*, 142; Richardson, *Christianity of Ignatius*, 46. The phrase "his Holy Spirit" (Ign.*Phild* sal) might seem to apportion the Holy Spirit as a possession of Christ. Whilst it is possible that God is the assumed referent of "his" and is accidently omitted by Ignatius, it is also possible that Ignatius is referring to the spirit of Jesus (cf. Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19). The sentence "farewell to you who have obtained the Spirit that is not divided, which is Jesus Christ" (Ign.*Mag* 15) might imply the identity of Christ and the Spirit. Yet given the absence of both the definite article and "holy", it is preferable to render this "a spirit", referring to a disposition of unity within the church (Cf. Schoedel, *Ignatius* ,20, 132-3). It should not surprise us that such a spirit, or disposition, is identified with Jesus Christ.
[525] Corwin, *Ignatius*, 141
[526]Corwin, *Ignatius*, 142; *pace* Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 66n6.
[527] The words "and in the Spirit" are omitted in the Arabic version (Schoedel, *Ignatius*, 130).
[528] Corwin, *Ignatius*, 143
[529] Schoedel, *Ignatius* ,130

Spirit in Ign.*Mag* 13:2 is textually suspect, thus[530] the suspicion must be that this was "an addition made in the interest of trinitarianism".[531]

In the negative, it is recognised that Ignatius does not include triadic formulae in passages where they might be expected.[532] For example, in Ign.*Tral* 3:1, Ignatius parallels the three church offices – deacon, bishop, presbyter – with Jesus, the Father, and the apostles respectively. Similarly, in Ign.*Eph* 5:1 we find a triad of church-Jesus-Father in "symphonic union". Passages regarding unity do not appeal to the unity of three divine persons, where later writers might have done so (cf. Ign. *Phild* 4:1; Ign. *Mag* 8:2). From this evidence, it must be concluded that (what was to become) the Trinity was of little significance to Ignatius.[533]

f. Aristides of Athens (c.130)

The apology was rediscovered in the nineteenth century, firstly in fragments of an Armenian version, then in a full Syriac version, and then consequently as a Greek version which had been appropriated by *Barlaam and Joseph.* Some Greek papyri fragments dating from the fourth century have since come to light. Neither the Syriac nor the Greek version is likely to wholly preserve the original. According to Eusebius, Aristides wrote his apology during the reign of Hadrian (117-138). Grant speculates that the occasion of the apology may have been Hadrian's visit to Athens for his initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries.[534]

Aristides on God

Aristides describes God as "an ever-abiding nature without beginning and without end, immortal, perfect, and incomprehensible" (Apol. 1 [Syr]). He is unnameable, without need (Apol.1 [Syr]); he is "imperishable and unvarying and invisible" (Apol. 4 [Syr]); he is "uncreated" (Apol. 7 [Syr]). This negative theology, no doubt borrowed from philosophic sources, is in common with a contemporary text, the *Preaching of Peter,* which describes God as "invisible ... uncontainable ... having need of nought ... incomprehensible, perpetual, incorruptible, uncreated" (*Preaching* fr.2 = Clement, *Stromata* 6.5.39).[535] Repudiating the notion that the pagan gods are one in nature, Aristides affirms the unity of God in nature and essence (Apol 13 [Syr]). His repudiation seems based on the idea that two or more gods interacting with each other cannot be one in nature. It is interesting to speculate as to whether this would exclude a plurality of

[530] The words "and to the Spirit" are omitted in the Armenian and Arabic. Ehrman, quite unaccountably, omits the words from his Greek text but includes them in his English translation (Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers,* 1:254-5)
[531] Schoedel, *Ignatius* ,131
[532] Cf. Corwin, *Ignatius,* 142
[533] Corwin, *Ignatius,* 143; Schoedel, *Ignatius* ,20;
[534] R. M. Grant, "The Chronology of the Greek Apologists", *Vigiliae Christianae* 9:1 (1955) 25. For discussion of the date and occasion of the apology see S. Parvis, "Justin Martyr and the Apologetic Tradition", in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (eds. S. Parvis & P. Foster; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) 119; P. Carrington, *The Early Christian Church* (Cambridge: CUP, 1957) 2:95; G. C. O'Ceallaigh, "'Marcianus' Aristides' Aristides on the Worship of God", *HTR* 51:4 (1958), 231. The standard edition of Aristides is J. R. Harris, *The Apology of Aristides on behalf of the Christians* (Cambridge: CUP, 1891), which contains the Syriac and Greek texts of the apology and English translations from the Syriac and Armenian.
[535] O'Ceallaigh proposes that these parallels are due to the Christian interpolators dependence on Clement, however his main example, the mention of the worship of angels, is better explained as an allusion to Col 2:16-17 (O'Ceallaigh, "Aristides", 248-9). For the relationship between the apology of Aristides and the *Preaching of Peter* see Harries, *Aristides,* 97-8 and Gaston, "Early Apologists".

persons within the Godhead, such as in the Trinity. It is probably because Aristides is unfamiliar with the concept that he does not qualify his comments against such exclusion.

Aristides on Jesus

The majority of Aristides' Christological statements are confined to a single passage that is likely to be inauthentic (Apol 2 [Syr]; cf. Apol 15 [Bar]), making any reconstruction difficult.[536] Were this passage, which affirms the deity of Christ and the incarnation authentic, it would stand in stark contrast to what he says of what is unseemly or even impossible about the pagan gods. He complains "some even died ... some were made servants even to men ... some, indeed, were lamented and deplored by men. And some, they say, went down to Sheol, and some were grievously wounded ..." (Apol. 8 [Syr]; cf. Apol 8 [Bar]). Yet these very things are attributed to Christ in the gospels. The force of Aristides' argument against the pagan gods is that it is impossible for a god to be mutable and passible and mortal, otherwise he is not a god. He writes that "it is impossible" for a god to be mutilated (Apol 9 [Syr]). Yet if Aristides is to be consistent, he must reject the idea that God was crucified and buried. If we make the excision and make the corollary from Aristides criticisms of the pagan gods, then it seems likely that Aristides did not believe in the incarnation or full deity of Jesus.

Aristides on the Spirit and Triads

There is one triad in the apology: "For they know God, the Creator and Fashioner of all things through the only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit" (Apol 15 [Bar]). The parallel passage in the Syriac does not reference either the Son or Spirit, which makes the authenticity of this triad questionable.[537] This reference to the Spirit is unique in this apology. The most likely explanation is that it is an addition by Euthymius, as he updates the text for his readers.

g. Epistle to Diognetus (c.150)

The date, occasion and author of the epistle are unknown; the name "Diognetus" is too common to permit identification. The closest comparators are the *Apology of Aristides* and the *Preaching of Peter,* so the epistle may be tentatively dated to around the mid-second century.[538]

Theology

God is both παντοκράτορ (all-ruler) and παντοκτίσης (all-creator) (Diog 7.2); he is δεσπότης and δημιουργός (Diog 8:7). He is "invisible" (Diog 7.2), but also "benevolent" (8.7) and "good" (8.8). God is transcendent, inasmuch as he was unknown prior to the revelation of his Son (8.1), but the author does not develop this transcendence along the

[536] "It is said that God came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin assumed and clothed himself with flesh". It is commonly recognised that this passage is taken from a creedal summary (Harris, *Aristides,* 23-25). However, the extant text goes far beyond any other writer from this period. O'Ceallaigh notes that the closest parallels for the phrase "assumed and clothed himself with flesh" come from the fourth or fifth centuries (citing *Apostolic Constitutions* VII.41, Theodore of Mopsuestia and the Council of Chalcedon's symbolon). Similarly the phrase "after fulfilling the whole economy" (Apol 15 [Bar]) also appears to be late. O'Ceallaigh concludes that this passage must have been inserted after the emergence of a formal Eastern creed at the synod of Constantinople (360; O'Ceallaigh, "Aristides", 239-241).

[537] "For they know and trust in God, the Creator of heaven and of earth, in whom and from whom are all things, to whom there is no other god as companion" (Apol 15 [Syr]).

[538] For Greek text and English translation see Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers.*

lines of negative theology. There is no hint here of an aloof God, unable to interact with the world directly and in need of demiurgic intermediaries.[539] The Son is also named Demiurge, but there is no explication of what demarcation of activity this shared title represents. Rather, the Son mediates for God as one who reveals what God is like.

The Son is called τεχνίτης and δημιουργός (7.2), but his role in creation is unclear – God creates both "by" his son (7.2) and "along with" his son (9.1). This ambiguity is perhaps an attempt to do justice to the preceding traditions of both Father and Son being creators. The author does not show any awareness of a Logos-christology; the Son is the means by which God establishes "the holy word" in the hearts of men (7.2). He is called "son" (υἱός*;* 7.4; 10.2) and "child" (παῖδος*;* 8.9, 11). These personal terms, alongside the general descriptions of the interactions between Father and Son prior to the revelation of the Son, seem to indicate that a personal pre-existence is presupposed. When the author writes "he sent him as a god" (7.4), he probably does not intend to name the Son as "God"; elsewhere he says a charitable givers become "a god to those who receive them" (10.6). Rather, the author is describing the function of the Son in relation to those to whom he reveals God, as both a god and a man. The divinity of the Son, and particularly his righteousness, is integral to the atonement (9.4). The role of the Son both in revelation and in the atonement implies subordination, although this is not made explicit.

The Spirit is not mentioned in *Diognetus* and there are no triads.

h. Summary

"There is no *doctrine* of the Trinity in the New Testament in the sense of an understanding of triunity".[540] The earliest Christians made no use of the concept of ontological or divine triads; the only triads that occur in texts from the period are liturgical, such as the trine baptismal formula (see below).

The teaching of Jesus does not contain any divine triad, but rather seems largely consistent with his Jewish context, positing one God who acts in the world through his Spirit and through human beings (such as prophets). Jesus did depart from his Jewish context in a number of aspects. He emphasised the fatherhood of God, thus ascribing to God a high level of intimacy with creation. He also identified himself with the Jewish Messiah and with the apocalyptic Son of Man, ascribing to himself special function in purpose of God and presumably envisioning himself appearing before the throne of God. He seems to have had a profound filial consciousness, which is explained by two evangelists as a literal conception through the Spirit of God. But he did not present himself as God (or a god), nor give any indication of an existence prior to his birth.

The thoughts of the earliest Christians seem largely consistent with this teaching. Paul adopts Jesus' ideas about the fatherhood of God and presents this immanence alongside the transcendent qualities of God. The Spirit is presented as the power and presence of God, working to achieve the sanctification of believers. Paul believes that Jesus has ascended to the right hand of God and will return from there, but is at all times subject to God's authority. Indications of the pre-existence of Jesus and his creative function are isolated and probably derive from the identification of Jesus as the embodiment of Wisdom. John picks up on this theme, explicitly identifying Jesus as Wisdom (now using

[539]*Pace* Foster, "Diognetus", 166

[540]W. J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a mystery of salvation* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982) 29.

the masculine noun λόγος) and is bold in what he ascribes to Jesus, regarding his sonship, authority and pre-existence (as the impersonal Word). But he stops short and even rebuts the identity and equality of Jesus with God. The personification (or angelomorphication) of the Spirit as the Paraclete goes beyond anything in Paul. It testifies to the new experience of the Spirit as the presence of the Father and Jesus in the lives of the early Christians. But John does not draw out any triadic conclusions, since for him the personification of the Spirit did not imply a distinct personhood.

The (more) Hellenised Christianity represented by Ignatius utilized different terminology for expressing God's transcendence. It even considered "god" an appropriate description for the role of Jesus. Despite this difference in language, the theology of Ignatius does not seem to have deviated significantly from his predecessors. He places greater emphasis on the transcendence of God and thus rejoices in the manifestation of God in flesh through Jesus Christ. Through considering Jesus to be God-in-man, he does not identify or equate Jesus and God, but rather subordinates the former to the latter. It is uncertain whether he believed Jesus existed before his birth, but he does identify Jesus as the Word. The Spirit is identified with God's power, and so Ignatius has no divine triad to present. The first (known) Christian philosopher, Aristides, utilised the concept of divine transcendence as articulated by Xenophanes to challenge all forms of idol-worship and anthropomorphic gods. In so doing, he seemingly drove a wedge between God and Jesus. And he says nothing of a divine triad.

In sum, prior to Justin there is no divine triad within the Christian tradition. Ontologically speaking, Jesus is not identified as God but subordinated to him; his role is primarily understood as being that of an exalted man. The Spirit is identified as the power of God without any clear articulation of its being distinct from God, except verbally.

5. The Baptismal Formula

a. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I have presented evidence that there is no extant presentation of an ontological divine triad in the Christian tradition prior to Justin's enumeration of a hierarchical triad. Chronologically, this coincides with the period when Christians began engaging seriously with Platonic philosophy. I will argue that there is some parallelism between the ontological triads of the "school" of Justin and those being formulated by their Platonic contemporaries. However, even before Justin and throughout the Christian tradition, there is evidence of liturgical statements with a triadic structure. One early liturgical triad is 2 Cor 13:14, but this form of benediction is unique amongst the Pauline epistles (see above) and is not adopted in any early Christian liturgy extant. The most persistent and most primitive triadic liturgy is the trine baptismal formula.

In this chapter I will trace Christianity's triadic liturgy from the fourth century creeds back in history to the primitive trine baptismal formula. It will become apparent from this analysis that a threefold aspect associated with baptism was widespread and near-universal in early Christianity. Though conventionally different, baptismal practices have been distinguished for Western and Syrian Christians, or even for different language groupings within the Syrian churches,[541] the threefold aspect seems to transcend all these distinctions, which testifies to its primitiveness. The counter-example is the onefold phraseology "into the name of the Lord Jesus", which similarly has roots in primitive Christianity. We shall observe that often this phrase is used by the same authors who use the trine baptismal formula, and who do not treat it as a competing baptismal liturgy but as a description of Christian baptism.

Finally, we shall explore the meaning and significance of the trine baptismal formula within primitive Christianity, demonstrating that it does not betoken a belief in (or even an awareness of) an ontological divine triad. Rather, it is an expression of the faith-commitments for the primitive Christian community.

b. Christian Baptismal Practice

i. Fourth Century Creeds

We begin our analysis with comparison of the creeds of the fourth century. These were summaries of beliefs, with new elements added over time as tests of orthodoxy.[542] Prior to the Council of Nicaea (and even after it) there was no one universal Christian creed: instead a variety of statements existed. However, whilst these creeds varied in content and wording, the basic structure was the same; though not explicitly Trinitarian, they are all threefold.[543]

For example, an African creed (c.400) reconstructed on the testimony of Augustine is constituted around three clauses:

[541] Cf. T. M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: West and East Syria* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992) 29; cf. P. F. Bradshaw, "The Profession of Faith in Early Christian Baptism", *Ecclesia Orans* 23 (2006) 41;
[542] F. M. Young, *The Making of the Creeds* (London: SCM Press, 1991) 13
[543] Young, *Making of Creeds*, 4

> "we believe in God the Father Almighty ... we believe in Jesus Christ his Son ... we believe in the Holy Spirit ..."[544]

In Lietzman's reconstruction (or reconciliation) of fourth century Eastern creeds, we find this threefold confession:

> "I believe in one God, the Father ... and in one Lord Jesus Christ ... and in the Holy Spirit"[545]

Though the earliest text extant dates from c.700, the wording of the (so-called) *Apostles' Creed* is found in Marcellus (c.340), Rufinus (c.404) and in the baptismal interrogations described in the *Apostolic Tradition.*[546] Consequently, it is usually identified as the creed of the Roman church around the fourth century. Its structure is also threefold:

> "I believe in God, the Father almighty ... I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son ... I believe in the Holy Spirit"

Comparison might also be made with other fourth century creeds like that of Jerusalem, recorded by Cyril, or the creed of Constantinople.[547] In every case the creed has three main clauses which make reference to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The question is what explains this coincidence of creedal structure. Whilst it may be tempting to speculate about some tradition of threefold creeds stretching back to the earliest days of Christianity, the evidence does not bear out such a hypothesis. Threefold creedal statements did exist as early as the second half of the second century. For example, although it dates from the fourth century, it is generally considered that the threefold creed contained in the *Dêr Balyzeh Papyrus* is much earlier.[548] A similar creed is contained in the *Epistula Apostolurum* (c.150).[549] However, these threefold creeds were not universal. Irenaeus, writing in the late second century, was able to draw on both two-article and three-article summaries of Christian doctrine.[550] A twofold profession is recorded of the presbyters of Smyrna in the early 3rd century (cf. *Against Noetus*).[551] One of the earliest Christian creedal statements is a two-article profession (i.e. 1 Cor 8:6). As Kelly writes, "the binitarian schema, it is evident, was deeply impressed upon the thought of primitive Christianity".[552] Yet even two-article creeds were not normative; creeds developed as conventional summaries of beliefs and had a range of forms dictated by their range of subject matter (cf. 1 Cor 12:3; Rom 10:9; Acts 2:36; Rom 1:3-4; 1 Tim 3:16; Ign.*Tral* 9:1-2).[553] Conversely, those NT statements with a threefold pattern appear to be liturgical (cf. 2 Cor 13:14; Matt 28:19). As Carpenter concludes, "no writer down to and including Tertullian can be quoted as showing exclusive attachment to one structured form of summary, much less to one exact formula".[554]

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[544]J. H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches* (Westminster John Knox, 1982) 25
[545]Leith, *Creeds*, 27
[546]Leith, *Creeds*, 22-4
[547] Young, *Making of Creeds*, 4
[548]Leith, *Creeds*, 19; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (2nd ed; London: Longmans, 1960)89
[549]Leith, *Creeds*, 17
[550] Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 80
[551]Leith, *Creeds*, 18
[552] Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 22
[553] Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 13-16; Young, *Making of Creeds*, 3
[554] H. J. Carpenter, "Creeds and Baptismal Rites in the First Four Centuries" in *Conversion, Catechumenate and Baptism in the Early Church* (ed. E. Ferguson; London: Garland, 1993) 377.

An alternative explanation for the common structure of fourth century creeds is their shared precedent in Christian baptismal practice. For instance, it is commonly held that the Old Roman Symbol, which stands behind the *Apostles' Creed,* derives from the interrogatory confessions made at baptism. It was common practice from the fourth century onwards for a threefold confession, either via rendition or interrogation, to be made at baptism.[555] Questions concerning the fixity of the text of the *Apostolic Tradition* have raised the possibility that the interrogatory confessions recorded therein were secondarily conformed to a pre-existing Roman creed; nevertheless, the primacy of a trine baptismal formula seems likely given the use of threefold baptismal interrogation elsewhere.[556] Indeed, we shall trace the continuous use of the trine baptismal formula to its earliest written usage in Matt 28:19.[557]

ii. Third Century Baptismal Practice

The apocryphal Acts, dating from the third to the sixth centuries are consistent in their use of the threefold formula in their descriptions of baptisms performed (cf. *Acts of the Apostles* 25-27; *Acts of Philip* 36.7; *Acts of Martyrdom of Matthew* 8 & 26; *Acts of Barnabas* 26; *Acts of Thaddaeus* 1-4).[558] There are examples of the use of the onefold formula, but these stories are intended to describe exceptional cases rather than the standard practices in established Christian communities and they do not describe their baptismal ceremonies.

Cyprian writes that there was a baptismal confession of faith that took the form of responses to a threefold set of questions. The wide usage of such a pattern is attested to by the fact that Cyprian says Novation used the same symbol as the catholic church (*Letters* 69).[559] He elsewhere characterises baptism as being "in the name of Christ" (*Letters* 73); for him this phrase seemed to function as "a general description of baptism by all who claimed to be Christians".[560]

Earlier than Cyprian, Tertullian also attests to the threefold interrogation. He describes how candidates make a confession of faith at baptism (*On the Show 4*), which is linked to the three persons: Father, Son and Spirit (*Baptism* 6.1). He says that the candidate is immersed three times, once for each person (*Against Praxeas* 26). He writes "we are thrice immersed, while we answer interrogations rather more extensive than our Lord has prescribed in the gospel" (*On the Crown* 3).[561] It has been suggested that "more extensive" might refer to the number of interrogations.[562] However, elsewhere he says that Matt 28:19 prescribes the form for baptism (*Baptism* 13.3) so he is likely talking about the expansion of the triple formula, such as the inclusion of reference to the church in the third interrogation (cf. *Testamentum Domini* and Cyprian).[563] It is important to emphasise that these interrogations were not the only confession of faith made by the candidate; "the interrogations mention points of teaching which must have been imparted to the catechumen in his instruction more fully and are here conveniently

[555] Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 32; Young, *Making of Creeds*, 3
[556] E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 332
[557] Young, *Making of Creeds*, 6
[558] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 234-5
[559] Carpenter argues that "symbol" might refer to the act of baptism, including the interrogations, rather than the recitation of a creed (Carpenter, "Creeds and Baptism", 371).
[560] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 353
[561] M. E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation* (Liturgical Press, 2007) 61
[562] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 341
[563] Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 351

summarised".[564] Bradshaw proposes that the repetition of the words of the interrogation by the candidate is similar to the taking of the military oath for those being drafted into the army (cf. *Ad Martyras* 3.1).[565] Whilst these interrogations were an affirmation of belief, they did not represent the full set of beliefs of the candidate or the church; the interrogations were not a creed.[566] In fact, Tertullian attests to both two-article and three-article creeds. Kelly writes that it is difficult to argue that "Tertullian knew a single authoritative creed, even a local one".[567]

We find the same basic ritual described in an early third century text from Syria, the *Didascalia Apostolorum.*[568] Based upon the *Didache*, this text seems to have been interpolated by later writers, making its witness uncertain. Even so, Bradshaw writes, "with the later accretions peeled away, the core baptismal rite appears to have involved a brief threefold response by the candidate to questions put to him or her and accompanied by a threefold immersion in the water".[569] He also draws the parallels with Roman law of *stipulatio* or *sponsio,* whereby the prospective creditor asks a question (*interrogatio*) and to which prospective debtor responds (*responsio*) in the affirmative, repeating the same verb that occurs in the question. "This cultural background implies that the original purpose of the baptismal questions and answers is therefore better seen as the establishing of a contract between the candidate and the triune God than as constituting subscription to specific articles of faith".[570]

Also from the early third century comes the *Apostolic Tradition.* Though previously ascribed to Hippolytus, the composite nature of the document has called into question its reliability as a witness to practice in the Roman church in the early third century.[571] This being said, the parallels with Tertullian suggest that the baptismal material is largely from the early third century.[572] There was no creed, but an affirmation of faith was made in response to three questions, with an immersion for each affirmation.[573] A number of later sources based on the *Apostolic Tradition* attest to the same basic baptismal rite.[574] Whilst these sources witness to "considerable variation in the wording of what is included in the confessions about the Holy Spirit",[575] the three interrogations are always affirmations regarding the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

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[564] Carpenter, "Creeds and Baptism", 376
[565] Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 348
[566] Carpenter, "Creeds and Baptism", 372
[567]Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 87 citing *De Praescriptione* 36; *De virginities relandis* 1; *Adversus Praxien* 2. Cf. Young, *Making of Creeds*, 9
[568] Johnson, *Christian Initiation*, 41
[569] Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 348
[570] Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 348
[571] Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 347
[572] Ferguson, *Baptism,* 325-8
[573]Ferguson, *Baptism,* 331; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds,* 48. Arabic, Ethiopic and Sahidic versions do insert a creed before the interrogations but this is likely a later addition (Carpenter, "Creeds and Baptism", 372; also see Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 347).
[574] See *Canons of Hippolytus, Testament of the Lord,* Ambrose of Milan and *Gelasian Sacreamentary.* See E. C. Whitaker, "The History of the Baptismal Formula", in *Conversion, Catechumenate and Baptism in the Early Church* (ed. E. Ferguson; London: Garland, 1993) 379 and Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 349-50.
[575] Ferguson, *Baptism,* 332

Both Origen and Clement associated the triple formula with baptism.[576] Origen describes it as a profession of faith: "when we come to the grace of baptism, renouncing all other gods and lords, we confess only God the Father and Son and Holy Spirit" (*Hom Ex* 8.4).

iii. Second Century Baptismal Practice

Given that the practice of incorporating a threefold interrogation as part of the baptismal rite was widespread in the early third century, we should not be surprised to find this same practice in the preceding century. Our evidence is generally less explicit on the actual ceremony of baptism, but consistently a threefold formula is associated with baptism.

Irenaeus writes "we have received baptism for the remission of sins, in the name of God the Father, and in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was incarnate and died and rose again, and in the Holy Spirit of God" (Dem 3). The expansion of Matt 28:19 with creedal elements indicates that Irenaeus is not simply characterising baptism but quoting (something like) the clauses used in the baptismal ceremony. He also provides an explanation for why "our regeneration proceeds through these three points",[577] interpreting the three baptismal clauses as a summary of the economy of salvation (Dem 7).

A number of apocryphal Acts dating from the second half of the second century attest to baptism with the triple formula (cf. *Acts of Peter; Acts of Judas Thomas*).[578] The *Acts of Paul* mention baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" (e.g. 34), though the Coptic version describes Paul baptising a lion by triple immersion.[579] In one instance it includes the line "after instructing them in the things concerning the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, he baptized them" (57), which might imply a threefold affirmation of faith prior to baptism; however Ferguson considers this to be "a secondary insertion".[580]

Our fullest account of baptismal practice from the second century comes from Justin. In 1 Apol 61.3 Justin introduces the baptismal formula: "for at the name of the Father of all and Lord God, and of our saviour Jesus Christ, of Holy Spirit they then wash in water". He then explains the stages of the ceremony. There appear to be three washings which coincide with the three pronouncements by the leader of the baptism (1 Apol 61.10, 13). There is some discussion about how to interpret the pronouncements; whether as a profession of faith or an invocation.[581] Bradshaw writes "while it is just about conceivable that the Greek verb translated here as 'invoked' (ἐπονομάζω) could mean that the baptizer questions the candidate about his or her belief in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, its more natural sense would seem to be that the baptizer pronounces over the candidate the threefold name".[582] Justin states explicitly that it is not the name of God that is pronounced because God does not have a name (1 Apol 61.11); presumably, therefore, it is the formula "the name of the Father of all and the Lord God" that is

[576] Johnson, *Christian Initiation*, 58; Ferguson, *Baptism*, 316
[577] Ferguson suggests that this phrase implies triple immersion (Ferguson, *Baptism*, 304).
[578] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 228; B. D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism* (Ashgate, 2006) 20
[579] "if the Coptic version faithfully represents the original Greek at this point, this passage would be the earliest explicit testimony to triple immersion in Christian baptism" (Ferguson, *Baptism*, 230-1). Triple immersion is also mentioned in *Physiologos* (2nd to 4th century; Ferguson, *Baptism*, 236).
[580] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 232
[581] Johnson, *Christian Initiation*, 39; cf. Ferguson, *Baptism*, 239
[582] Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 346

pronounced. He says "if anyone were to dare to say that there is name he raves with incurable madness", possibly a jibe at the Jews or the Gnostics. He contrasts this "madness" with the enlightenment of the mind represented by baptism. For Justin, the baptismal pronouncements are not incantations but expressions of belief. This is demonstrated further by the way Justin adds descriptions of Jesus ("who was crucified under Pontus Pilate") and the Spirit ("who proclaimed through the prophets"; 1 Apol 61.13). These would seem to be part of some confession or catechization; they are certainly reminiscent of earlier summaries of faith.[583] This would indicate that the baptismal formula is an expression of the beliefs which the initiate has accepted. Kelly agrees that "it reproduces an accepted baptismal form".[584]

Witnesses from the first half of the second century to baptismal practice are difficult to establish with certainty. Ferguson claims that a second century Jewish-Christian source (possibly Ebionite) can be distilled from the fourth century Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions.*[585] This source would seem to bear witness to Jewish-Christian practices of regular baptisms for purification (cf. Jewish practice), but also to a baptism accompanied by a "thrice-blessed invocation" (Hom 9.19, 23; 11:26; 13:4; Recog 1:63, 69; 3:67; 4:22; 6.9). This is explained as baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf. Hom 11.26-27). There is also reference to baptism "in the name of Jesus".[586] This source shares with Justin the same sequence of initiation (i.e. instruction, fasting, baptism, eucharist); which Ferguson takes as indicating "a common practice in the second century among Jewish and Gentile churches".[587]

Other sources for the early second century might be found in heterodox forms of Christianity. For example, it is possible that the Marcionites used the trine baptismal formula (cf. Augustine, *On Baptism* 3.15.20), though the source is too late to bear any weight.[588] More substantial witness derives from the Valentinians, who appear to have used a threefold formula at baptism. Whilst most of our sources for the Valentinians date from the late second century onwards, it is likely that their baptismal ritual is rooted in Christian practice prior to Valentinus' break with the Church. Valentinian sources either witness to the familiar threefold formula of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (*Excerpts from Theodotus* 76.3; cf. 80.3; *Tripartite Tractate* I.5.127.25-34; *Gospel of Philip* 59:1167.11-22) or, possibly, to a threefold formula of Father, Mother and Son (Irenaeus, AH 1.21.3). The Valentinians seem to have placed great significance on receiving the "Name", which is identified as that power which descended on Jesus at baptism.[589] However, the *Tripartite Tractate* implies that the threefold formula was a confession of faith made "in those names". Whilst the procedure is somewhat more elaborate, Valentinian initiation had at its core the same basic sequence as the Church (i.e. instruction, fasting and baptism): what differed was the plan of salvation.[590]

Whilst baptism was practiced amongst Sethian Gnostics, there are varying descriptions of ceremonies and initiations and it is not clear how many involved immersion in water.

[583] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 239
[584] Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 73
[585] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 248-250
[586] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 254
[587] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 255
[588] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 278
[589] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 281, 285
[590] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 289

For example, *Zostrainus* (mid-3rd century) describes a series of seven baptisms in the name of Autogenes, which might be an elaboration on Christian baptism in the name of Jesus. *Melchizedek,* like Valentinian texts, places emphasis on the receiving of the Name.[591] The Sethian concept of the five seals has been variously explained as referring to five immersions, to a pentad of names, to a fivefold profession, or to five different elements of the initiation ceremony. However, there are some Sethian references which might indicate a baptismal triad. The *Gospel of the Egyptians* includes a baptismal invocation of Yesseus, Mazareus or Yessedekeus, which Logan says "seems to hint at" a threefold name; the text itself explains the invocation as receiving the name of the "self-begotten perfect one" (III.2.66.22).[592]*Pistis Sophia* refers to three immersions (3.122) and the *Book of Jeu* refers to three baptisms (water, fire and holy spirit; 2.43). Logan argues that the structure of the Barbeloite myth also indicates an initiation in the triad of father-mother-son (cf. AH 1.29.3; *Ap.John* 2.14); he argues that this is the source of the Valentinian formula (cf. AH 1.21.3).[593] Ferguson concludes that "Sethian baptism, whether metaphorical or ritual or both, shows few points of contact with Christian baptism".[594] Logan, on the other hand, argues that "the similarity but difference of the Gnostic Trinity to that of 'mainstream' Christians is surely no coincidence".[595] Our only explicit reference to a father-mother-son baptismal formula comes from Irenaeus, and he refers to alternative initiation rites - but this triad would seem to have its origins in the Barbeloite myth. If pre-Valentinian Gnosticism practiced baptism with a threefold formula and if it is too great a coincidence that two trine baptismal formulas should have arisen independently, then we may conclude that a trine baptismal formula was used in those churches where Gnosticism arose in around the early second century.

Ode 19 of the *Odes of Solomon* is sometimes understood as a baptismal psalm, due to its reference to a womb giving birth. This would be significant as it mentions Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the latter is represented as female).[596]

iv. First Century Baptismal Practice

Outside the NT only the *Didache* gives an account of Christian baptismal practice, though possible allusions have been noted amongst the Apostolic Fathers (e.g. 1 Clem 46:6).[597] Hermas mentions baptism "into the name of the Lord" only (Vis. 3.7.3).

Though the *Didache* is conventionally dated to the late first or early second century,[598]scholars have increasingly dated it early. Robinson, who was willing to date *Matthew* early, dated the *Didache* between 40 and 60 AD.[599] Since Köster, a number of scholars have questioned the dependence of the *Didache* on *Matthew,* or even argued that the dependence flows the other way.[600] Milavec has argued that *Matthew* and the

[591] Ferguson, *Baptism,* 293-5
[592] A. H. B. Logan, "The Mystery of the Five Seals: Gnostic Initiation Reconsidered", *Vigiliae Christianae* 51:2 (1997) 192
[593] Logan, "Five Seals", 191-2
[594] Ferguson, *Baptism,* 298-9
[595] Logan, "Five Seals", 192
[596] Spinks, *Rituals,* 18; Finn, *Early Christian Baptism,* 111;
[597] Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 66
[598] Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers,* 1:411; Ferguson, *Baptism,* 201
[599]J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976) 327.
[600] J. A. Draper, "The Apostolic Fathers: The Didache", *ET* 117:5 (2006) 178; A. Milavec, "Synoptic Tradition in the *Didache* Revisited", *JECS* 11:4 (2003) 443-480.

Didache actually present differing positions on a range of topics and thus concludes that both draw on an independent (oral) Jesus tradition.[601] The inclusion of the Two Ways material has led scholars to consider the *Didache* to be a Jewish-Christian text, probably originating from Syria.

Johnson diagnoses a four stage process described in the text. Firstly catechism, probably involving instruction in the Two Ways ("having said all these things in advance"; 7.1), then fasting (7.4; cf. 8:1-3), then baptism and finally the Eucharist (9.1-10.7).[602] Hartman suggests the Two Ways was read at baptism, the candidate having previously received more substantial instruction. This follows the model of proselyte baptism whereby candidates are instructed in the *halakah*prior to baptism and certain commandments are read aloud during the ceremony.[603] Bradshaw, noting that there is no profession of faith mentioned in the *Didache*, suggests that this occurred during the period of doctrinal instruction as indicated in *Didascalia Apostolorum.*[604]

The *Didache* instructs that the candidate be baptised in running water "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (7.1). If this is not possible, the instruction is to pour water on the head of the candidate three times "in the name of Father and of Son and of Holy Spirit" (7.3).[605] The triple pouring presumably corresponds to the three names. Ferguson suggests that this might imply triple immersions for the running water baptism.[606] It has sometimes been suggested that the trine baptismal formula is a later interpolation, as elsewhere the text speaks of baptism "in the name of the Lord" (9.5).[607] However, this suggestion fails to distinguish between the different functions of the two statements; 7.1 describes the baptismal ceremony, whereas 9.5 prohibits non-Christians from the Eucharist.[608] That the threefold phrase was a liturgical formula is indicated by the conjunction of the phrase with the action of baptism, either immersion or pouring.

The baptismal formula in the *Didache* parallels the commission given by Jesus in Matt 28:19.[609] Whilst the textual witness to Matt 28:19 in the NT manuscripts is impeccable, there are a few textual witnesses dissenting. Eusebius attests to a short form,[610] as does the 14th century Hebrew version of *Matthew*.[611] The presence of the formula in earlier witnesses (Irenaeus, AH 3.17.1; cf. Justin, 1 Apol 61; cf. MSS) tells against the Eusebian

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[601] Milavec, "*Didache* Revisited", 443-480; A. Milavec, "A Rejoinder", *JECS* 13:4 (2005) 519-523; A. Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 CE* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003).

[602] Johnson, *Christian Initiation,* 36. Arguably 9:1 begins a new section and does not indicate that the Eucharist meal was celebrated after baptism.

[603]L. Hartman, *'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus': Baptism in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997) 173. Spinks regards the Two Ways as constituting the content of pre-baptismal instruction (*Rituals,* 16).

[604] Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 338-40

[605] The Greek texts omits the definite articles here, though presumably they are implied.

[606] Ferguson, *Baptism,* 203. "Triple immersion became the nearly universal custom from the third to fifth centuries. Whether it too was practiced but not mentioned earlier cannot be determined" (Ferguson, *Baptism,* 855).

[607] Draper, "Didache", 179; cf. Ferguson, *Baptism,* 201; cf. Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 339

[608] Cf. Ferguson, *Baptism,* 203

[609] Also see T. E. Gaston, "The Baptismal Formula(s)", *CEBI* 6:4 (2012).

[610] G. Howard, "A Note on the Short Ending of Matthew", *HTR* 81:1 (1988) 117; cf. F. C. Conybeare, "The Eusebian Form of the Text Matt. 28.19", *ZNW* (1901);

[611] Howard, "Short Ending", 118-120; G. Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Mercer University Press, 2005) 194;

form. The consensus is that Eusebius omitted the threefold formula for topical reasons.[612] Neither the triadic structure of the formula nor its uniqueness in the NT are strong indicators of interpolation,[613] given the parallel witness of the *Didache* and subsequent baptismal practice. This is the only occasion in *Matthew*¸ and one of the few occasions in the NT where any instructions for baptismal practice are given, so the uniqueness of the baptismal formula in Matt 28:19 is not necessarily unexpected.

In Matt 28:19 Jesus is commissioning his closest followers to go and make further disciples. The participle "baptizing" is dependent on the main verb "make disciples of", indicating that this baptism was seen as an initiation into discipleship.[614] We shall return to the meaning of the phrase "into the name of", but it is important to establish the function of this phrase. Conceivably it could be primarily descriptive, either defining the type of baptism or giving its theological significance. Alternatively, the phrase could be a formula for baptismal liturgy. Luz interprets the formula as a proclamation that was part of the baptismal ceremony.[615] Kelly agrees, saying "the conjecture is abundantly borne out by the Church's practice in regard to the formula in succeeding generations".[616] Ferguson, assuming *l*^{e}*shem* as precedent for εις (τό) όνομα (see below), writes "since in the Hebrew sources cited as parallel the worshipper speaks the formula, it was likely spoken by the convert".[617]

Elsewhere in the NT, there is scant detail of baptismal practice. In Rom 6:3-4, Paul explains baptism as a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.[618] A variant of Acts 8:37 includes the declaration "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God", which might have been part of the baptismal ceremony of the community that produced that MS.[619] Johnson assumes that NT baptism was preceded by a period of instruction and a profession of faith, but acknowledges that neither of these is explicitly mentioned.[620]

Throughout the NT there seem to be apparent references or allusions to another baptismal formula, namely, "into the name of Christ". However, it is questionable to what extent this phrase was used as a part of baptismal liturgy. For example, whilst εις το ονομα παυλου (1 Cor 1:13) is an allusion to the phrase εις το ονομα του κυριου ιησου, the fact that being baptised by Paul might be construed as being baptised into the name of Paul (cf. 1 Cor 1:14-15) implies that no formula was used. Just as one might be baptised εις χριστον (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27), one might also be baptised εις τον μωσην (1

[612] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 134; K. M. Hartvigsen, "Matthew 28:9-20 and Mark 16:9-20: Different Ways of Relating Baptism to the Joint Mission of God, John the Baptist, Jesus and their Adherents" in *Ablution, Initiation and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm, T. Vegge, Ø. Norderval & C. Hellholm; Walter de Gruyter, 2011) 657. Green has argued that Eusebius witnesses to a separate manuscript tradition that was, also, the most primitive, however his argument from internal evidence against the authenticity of the triadic formula is not strong (H. B. Green, "Matthew 28:19, Eusebius, and the *lex orandi*" in *The Making of Orthodoxy* (ed. R. Williams; CUP, 2002)).
[613] Hartvigsen, "Matt 28:9-20", 657; cf. J. Crehan, *Early Christian Baptism and the Creed* (London: Burns Oates & Washtome, 1950) 72
[614] B. M. Newman & P. C. Stine, *A Translator's Handbook of the Gospel of Matthew* (London: UBS, 1989) 913
[615] U. Luz, *Matthew 21-28* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) 632; cf. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1962) 83;
[616] Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 42
[617] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 136
[618] Ferguson, *Baptism*, 156
[619] Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 338
[620] Johnson, *Christian Initiation*, 23

Cor 10:2) and εις το ιωαννου βαπτισμα (Acts 19:3).[621] In 1 Cor 6:11, the conjunction of εν τω ονοματι του κυριου ιησου with εν τω πνευματι του θεου ημων indicates that the former was used descriptively of the method of salvation. Since του ονοματος του ιησου χριστου is used to describe the content of pre-baptismal instruction (Acts 8:12), it is possible that baptism εις το ονομα του κυριου ιησου (cf. 8:16) may describe the baptism of one who has received such instruction. The variety of forms (cf. επι Acts 2:38; εν 10:48; εις 19:5) might possibly reflect a variety of baptismal traditions,[622] but more probably indicates that this phrase was not formulaic. We cannot rule out a liturgical use of such a formula but there is no indisputable liturgical use recorded in the NT. Acts 22:16 mentions the use of an invocation associated with baptism, but it is not obvious that this formed part of a general baptismal ceremony.

c. The Origins of the Trine Baptismal Formula

i. The Trine Baptismal Formula and the Jesus Tradition

Matt 28:19 ascribes the trine baptismal formula as part of a commission from Jesus. The general consensus is that these words are not authentic words of Jesus and that the baptismal formula originates from the liturgical practice of the Matthean community.[623] I do not consider any of the objections given to be decisive.[624] Textual comparison of Matt 28:19 with other sayings of Jesus supports its authenticity, assuming these phrases can also be shown to be authentic.[625] The terms "the Father" and "the Son" should not be unexpected on the lips of Jesus given his teaching regarding the parental care of God and his own filial consciousness, regardless of what use later theologians put the terms to. However, the authenticity of this saying of Jesus is not integral to my thesis; the salient point is that the triadic baptismal formula is sufficiently primitive and fundamental to the Christian movement that it defined liturgical practice from the first century to the present day. If Hartman is correct that εις (τό) όνομα is equivalent to *l^{e}shem*, this requires that the baptismal formula was originally Aramaic, which in turn implies that it predates the Greek *Matthew* and is very early.[626]

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[621] L. Hartman, "Usages – Some Notes on the Baptismal Name-Formulae" in *Ablution, Initiation and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism and Early Christianity* (eds. D. Hellholm, T. Vegge, Ø. Norderval & C. Hellholm; Walter de Gruyter, 2011) 397.

[622] Hartman, *'Into the Name',* 37.

[623] Johnson, *Christian Initiation,* 2, 28; Hartman, *'Into the Name',* 147-8; D. Senior, *Matthew* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998) 347. A number of reasons are given for supposing Matt 28:19 to be inauthentic, including: (a) the implication of a triune God is clearly late, (b) there is no record of Jesus baptising, (c) the clear liturgical intention, (d) the absence of the trine baptismal formula in Paul and (e) the alternative formula, "into the name of Christ Jesus". See G. H. Gilbert, "The Baptismal Formula of Matt 28:19 in the Light of Jesus' Unquestionable Teaching", *The Biblical World* 34:6 (1909) 376. Also see Beasley-Murray, *Baptism,* 78.

[624] Briefly, (a) I agree that reference to a triune God would be anachronistic but I don't believe Matt 28:19 makes such a reference, (b) given its universal adoption it is likely that Jesus gave some command to baptism, (c) if Jesus commanded baptism then he might have offered a liturgy, (d) the trine baptismal formula is witnessed by the *Didache,* and (e) I will argue that only the trine baptismal formula was used liturgically. For further discussion see R. H. Mounce, *Matthew* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995) 268; Crehan, *Baptism and Creed,* 72ff; J. Delorme, "The Practice of Baptism in Judaism at the Beginning of the Christian Era" in *Baptism in the New Testament: A Symposium* (trans. D. Askew; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964) 25; Ferguson, *Baptism,* 133-135; W. C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 3rd ed. 1912; repr. 1957) 306; Hartvigsen, "Matt 28:9-20", 658.

[625] E.g. "all authority ..." (Matt 11:27 / Luke 10:22); "in heaven and on earth" (Matt 6:10 / Luke 11:2; Matt 11:25 / Luke 10:21; Matt 16:19 / Matt 18:18); "has been given" (Matt 13:11 / Luke 8:10); "... to all nations" (Matt 24:14 / Mark 13:10 / Luke 24:47)

[626] Hartman, 'Into the Name', 47

ii. The Meaning of the Trine Baptismal Formula

A number of explanations have been proposed for trine baptismal formula. Commonly, "name" (singular) has been taken to imply both the personhood of the Spirit and the unity of the three referents, and thus the baptismal formula is taken as a primitive expression of an ontological trinity. However such an expression would seem inconsistent with the teaching of Jesus and of primitive Christianity. Other explanations include linking the candidate's baptism to the "triune disclosure" at the baptism of Jesus;[627] some prior triadic liturgical practice (e.g. 2 Cor 13:14);[628] or as "a fuller expression of the Christian experience of the divine presence".[629] Yet to explain the trine baptismal formula we need to understand its meaning.

The phrase εις (τό) όνομα is uncommon in Greek literature. Heitmüller noted its use in Greek banking, where it had the meaning "paid into the account of", and so interpreted baptism as making the candidate the property of Jesus.[630] This explanation seems improbable as it entails the early Christian community repurposing banking terminology for theological purposes. Billerbeck and Bietenhard (TDNT) sought for an alternative explanation in the Hebrew *l^{e}shem* (lit. "into [somebody's] name"), though their exposition of this phrase yielded similar results to Heitmüller.[631] This has led to the common interpretation of εις (τό) όνομα as denoting identity and ownership.[632] Hartman, criticising Billerbeck and Bietenhard for distinguishing too sharply between the final and causal meanings of the phrase, believes his survey of the uses of *l^{e}shem* in rabbinic literature proves the "inadequacy of the dedicatory interpretation".[633] He focuses on ritual uses of the phrases *l^{e}shem-l^{e}shum* (which he believes to have a technical usage), saying it is used to "introduce the type, reason or purpose of the rite as well as its intention".[634] Therefore the phrase εις (τό) όνομα with regard to baptism characterised the ritual and distinguished it from other rites (i.e. Jesus-baptism, as opposed to John-baptism).[635]

Despite noting the wide usage of the *l^{e}shem*, Hartman later decided that the ritualistic use of the phrase had a more definite meaning. "The rites are performed 'into the name' of the god to whose cult the rite belongs or who is otherwise associated with the rite in question".[636] Therefore, he interprets the trine baptismal formula as accompanying a rite whose referent is a triune God.[637] However this conclusion seems questionable given the counter-examples already noted by Hartman (cf. m.Zeb 4.6).[638] Luz rejects Hartman's conclusion, arguing that the rabbinic expression *l^{e}shem* had a wide range of uses; it "contains no concrete reference to a name" and means "for the purpose of".[639] The

[627] Spinks, *Rituals*, 6; Luz, *Matthew*, 632;
[628] Luz, *Matthew*, 632;
[629] Senior, *Matthew*, 347
[630] Cf. Hartman, *'Into the Name'*, 38-40
[631] L. Hartman, "'Into the Name of Jesus': A suggestion concerning the earliest meaning of the phrase", *NTS* 20 (1974) 432-3; cf. Ferguson, *Baptism*, 135-6
[632] Sprinks, *Rituals*, 6
[633] Hartman, "Into the Name", 434, 438
[634] Hartman, "Into the Name", 439
[635] Hartman, "Into the Name", 439-440; cf. Hartman, *'Into the Name'*, 44
[636] Hartman, 'Into the Name', 42
[637] Hartman, 'Into the Name', 150
[638] Hartman, *'Into the Name'*, 41, 44
[639] Luz, *Matthew*, 632n135

translation of εις (τό) όνομα as "for the sake of" or "with reference to" seems supported by the use of the phrase elsewhere in the NT (Matt 10:42, 18:20; cf. 1 Cor 1:14-15; Heb 6:10).[640] The breadth of meanings of *l[e]shem* requires a range of English idioms to express them.[641]

If we accept the translation "baptizing them *for the sake of* the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", we still have not established the meaning of the formula. Newman and Stine's suggestion, "by the authority of",[642] seems speculative. In Matt 28:19 it is Christ who is commissioning baptism; whilst the authorisation of God and the Spirit might be implied, this is not stated. Allen's suggestion that the formula implies that baptism confers fellowship with Father, Son and Spirit[643] seems equally conjectural. Luz suggests that the formula implies that baptism is "constitutive of the new identity".[644] Whilst this may seem intuitive given that baptism was the Christian rite of initiation, comparison with the uses of εις (τό) όνομα do not bear out this idea. One was not baptized εις (τό) όνομα τοῦ ιωαννου (cf. Acts 19:3) or εις (τό) όνομα τοῦ μωσης (cf. 1 Cor 10:2). The hypothetical baptism εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου would not have identified one as a follower of Paul but constituted usurpation of the role properly ascribed to Christ (1 Cor 1:13). The only viable comparator we have is baptism εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ (Acts 8:16; 19:5).[645]Following the narrative of Acts 19, Paul expected the disciples at Ephesus to baptised "into" (εις) something. They were previously baptised "into John's baptism" and latterly baptised "into the name of the Lord Jesus". Paul distinguishes the former as the baptism of repentance from the latter as characterised by belief in Jesus (Acts 19:4). If του ονοματος του ιησου χριστου in Acts 8:12 may be read as the content of pre-baptismal teaching then it is significant that the initiates *believed* this teaching. That a profession of belief preceded baptism should not be surprising (cf. Mark 16:16; Acts 8:13, 8:37, 18:8) and that the content of that belief was Jesus is also unsurprising.

The conclusion that the baptismal formula was intended to characterize or summarise the faith-commitments made by the initiate may be corroborated by two further lines of evidence. The first is the way the formula developed. From the mid-second century, if not earlier, the threefold formula contained creedal elements; by the early third century, if not earlier, the formula had developed into a threefold interrogation. The creedal or professional application of the threefold formula was not universal; the Pseudo-Clementines, as well as other sources, attest to the use of formula as an invocation (cf. Valentinian practice). Nevertheless there is a strong association between the trine baptismal formula and the faith of the candidate. The second line of evidence is the possible precedent for Christian baptism in the initiation of Jewish proselytes.

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[640]In the Johannine writings, the phrase εις (τό) όνομα is connected with belief (John 1:12, 2:23, 3:18; 1 John 5:13). If interpreted as above this would suggest the translation "believe because of the Son of God", rather than "believe in the Son of God".

[641] Cf. D. Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament: Feasts and Sabbaths: Passover and Atonement* (Eerdmans, 2011) 128-9.

[642] Newman & Stine, *Matthew*, 914

[643] Allen, *Matthew*, 306; cf. Johnson, *Christian Initiation*, 28

[644] Luz, *Matthew*, 632

[645] Hartman rejects the idea that we can compare the usage of εις (τό) όνομα in *Matthew* and in *Acts*, saying "it is hardly permissible to assume that Paul or Luke understood it in the same way as the Palestinians did" (Hartman, "Into the Name", 435). I do not know any fact that would substantiate such an assertion. Indeed it seems entirely permissible that suppose that Paul understood the Hebrew idiom *l[e]shem* and that he received some tradition regarding baptism from the apostles at Jerusalem.

Admittedly, the documentary evidence of proselyte baptism is late[646] and the practice is not mentioned by Philo, Josephus or in *Judith* 14:10, where we might expect it.[647] However, the specification in Rabbinic sources for the need of sacrifice following immersion would suggest proselyte baptism pre-dates the fall of Jerusalem.[648] For our purposes, the significant aspect of proselyte baptism is that candidates received instruction in the water and were interrogated prior to immersion to dissuade the half-hearted.[649] Whilst it is by no means certain that proselyte baptism (in this form) was the precedent for Christian baptism, it witnesses to a cognate ritual with a professional element. It is, at least plausible that the trine baptismal formula was designed to articulate the content of *Christian* baptismal interrogation as distinguished from other baptismal practices. By faith-commitments I do not mean that the baptismal formula was a creed or summary of propositions to be accepted; rather, the formula articulates the acceptance by the initiate of the role of the three referents in his or her new life.[650]

If we may interpret the trine baptismal formula used by the primitive Christian community - whether a profession by the candidate or declaration by the administrator - as characterising the faith-commitments into which the candidate is baptised, then we may address the central question of why the baptismal formula was threefold.

It is worth mentioning that there is no precedent for associating baptism with threeness. It is sometimes suggested that proselyte baptism involved three immersions, perhaps because the word *mikveh* occurs three times in the Torah.[651] However, this seems to describe later practice; the Misnah prescribes only one immersion.[652] The Greek version of *The Life of Adam and Eve* (probably a first century Jewish text) does mention Adam washing three times in the presence of God, but this may be a Christian addition.[653]

The common explanation for the threefold formula is that, whilst Jewish converts required only confession of Jesus at their baptisms (hence "into the name of the Lord Jesus"); amongst the Gentiles, belief in one God and the activity of the Spirit could not be assumed and needed to be included in the baptismal profession of faith.[654] This narrative would tell against the interpretation of the baptismal formula as referring to a deity; the Father was always the primary deity of Christianity, not a later addition. This

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[646] Johnson, *Christian Initiation*, 9

[647] Ferguson, *Baptism,* 76-7. Other references to Jewish baptism includes Arrian, *Discourses of Epictetus* 2.9.19-21 and the reports of Josephus about the Essenes and Bannis (72-78; cf. Johnson, *Christian Initiation,* 8). Ritual washings may have a background in the Law of Moses (Num 19:17-20, Lev 15:5-13, Lev 14:6, 8).

[648] "When this washing was formalized as part of the process of becoming a proselyte, however, cannot be determined; when its meaning was extend beyond a ceremonial purification is apparently a yet later development" (Ferguson, *Baptism,* 78).

[649] Ferguson, *Baptism,* 80-2. It should be noted that in Judaism baptism was not the initiation but a ritual washing. Circumcision was still the heart of conversion.

[650] Cf. Bradshaw, "Profession of Faith", 352

[651] J. McFadden, *One Baptism* (Lulu, 2006) 55; W. M. Harmening, *Mystery at Corinth: Seeking a Jewish Answer to a Christian Mystery* (iUniverse, 2006) 91;

[652] L. R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* (IVP, 2002) 481

[653] Ferguson, *Baptism,* 67

[654] Hartman, *'Into the Name',* 151; Ferguson, *Baptism,* 136; Luz, *Matthew,* 632; Spinks, *Rituals,* 6, 15. Sim goes so far as to suggest that the post-Easter commission by Jesus was composed by Matthew to directly undermine the Gentile mission of Paul (D. C. Sim, "Matthew, Paul and the origin and nature of the gentile mission: The great commission in Matthew 28:16-20 as an anti-Pauline tradition", *Hervomde teologiese studies* 64:1 (2008).

narrative generally rests on the assumption that "into the name of the Lord Jesus" was a liturgical formula, later expanded to include extra clauses. I have argued above that this is more likely a descriptive phrase, characterising Jesus-baptism. Conceivably, this descriptor could have coexisted with the threefold liturgical formula (as it did in later years). It is also possible that both "into the name of the Lord Jesus" and "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" are descriptive phrases, rather than liturgical formulae. In the latter case our narrative may be nuanced to reflect that what changed between Jewish and Gentile contexts was the required faith-content, rather than the liturgical expression of that faith-content. The former case might seem to undermine our narrative, as it would remove any liturgical precedent for the threefold formula.

There are others problems with the common explanation. One problem is evidential. Though the phrase "into the name of the Lord Jesus" and its variants is used to describe the baptism of Jews into Christianity (Acts 2:38; presumably Acts 19:5), it is also used to describe the baptism of Samaritans (Acts 8:16) and Gentiles (Acts 10:48; cf. 1 Cor 1:14-16). Furthermore, the earliest references to the trine baptismal formula are found in (what are generally considered to be) Jewish-Christian sources (*Matthew* and *Didache*); rather than in letters of that great missionary to the Gentiles, Paul, or in the account of him in *Acts.* A second problem is that the terminology of the trine baptismal formula, whilst it is an appropriate summary of Jesus' teaching, does not appear to be the most appropriate terminology for Gentile audience. The term "the Father" refers to the Christian God but means something other than "the one true God to the exclusion of all others"; similarly, "the Son" refers to Jesus but it is not obvious why the term is to be preferred to "the Lord Jesus" for a Gentile audience.[655] Thirdly, one could argue that the fatherhood of God and the activity of the Holy Spirit, let alone the sonship of Jesus, were not givens for Jewish converts but would be significant aspects of their new faith. Therefore, the common explanation of a Jewish-focused formula expanded to a Gentile-focused formula fails to account sufficiently for the data.

A second common explanation is that "into the name of the Lord Jesus" and "into the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit" are the liturgical formulae of two separate communities. For example, it is sometimes suggested that the former derives from the liturgy of the (hypothesized) Lukan community and the latter derives from the liturgy of the (hypothesized) Matthean community. The allusions to the onefold phrase in Paul and the use of the threefold phrase in the *Didache* might lead to a broadening of the hypothesis - such that the former is the formula of the Gentile wing of the Christian community and the latter that of the Jewish-Christian wing of the Christian community. Whilst this hypothesis might seem to explain the distribution of occurrences of these phrases in the NT (and *Didache*), it depends on the assumption that "into the name of the Lord Jesus" was a liturgical formula – an assumption that I have challenged. If "into the name of the Lord Jesus" was a descriptor, utilised by Jewish-Christians (Did 9.5; Herm.Vis 3.7.3; cf. Acts 2:38), then the concept of a separate Gentile-Christian formula seems erroneous. It is possible, nevertheless, that the trine baptismal formula did originate amongst a certain Christian community (say, Jewish-Christian), whilst the other Christian communities had no fixed baptismal liturgy. This would explain its easy adoption by various Christian communities.

[655]Arguably the terminology of 2 Cor 13:14 – God, Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit – would be more appropriate.

It is plausible that the trine baptismal formula originated with Jesus, as indicated by the shared oral tradition behind *Matthew* and *Didache.* However, since there was no fixed baptismal liturgy in many primitive churches, it is unlikely that the formula was originally a baptismal liturgy if and when it was first uttered by Jesus. We might plausibly speculate that Jesus spoke the formula, in these or cognate terms, to indicate the faith-content of Christian initiation. Alternatively, it is possible that one specific community summarised the teaching of Jesus (and the early church) in this way.[656] According to *Acts,* the practice of immersion into the name of Jesus was developed within the circle of Peter (cf. Acts 2:38):[657] but this was not baptism merely as an affirmation of believing Jesus existed, or being his disciple, as this is ascribed to those who received the baptism of John (Acts 18:25; 19:1-3). Baptism "into the name of the Lord" was accompanied by receiving of the Spirit (Acts 2:38; 10:47-8; 19:5-6). The early Christians believed Jesus had ascended to the right hand of the Father and from there sent the Holy Spirit; "baptism in the Spirit (see Acts 1:4-5) and baptism into the name of Jesus were one and the same thing for that reason".[658] This new baptism was distinguished from John's baptism, not by the implied discipleship, but by the gift of the Spirit.[659] The formula "into the name of the Lord Jesus" expressed only part of the full Christian experience that included intimacy with God through the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:11). The trine baptismal formula is an articulation of this full Christian experience.[660]

d. Summary

Early Christianity is infused with a threefold liturgical pattern, which I have traced from the fourth century creeds through baptismal practice to its origins in the threefold experience of primitive Christians. The new life in Christ meant a new relationship with God, with Jesus *and* with the Spirit. This third aspect of the Christian experience, the intimate connection with the divine expressed through ecstatic utterances and miracles, was inevitably included in primitive liturgical summaries of the Christian faith – quintessentially in the trine baptismal formula. This Christian experience, and the liturgy formulated from it, tells us little with precision about the primitive Christian understanding of the ontological status of the three referents. The trine baptismal formula entails neither the personhood nor the ontological unity of its referents. Analysis of early Christian beliefs suggests that the primitive Christian experience entailed one God in heaven, one saviour exalted to his side as mediator and one power active on the earth amongst believers.

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[656] "A whole group of exegetes and critics have recognized that the opening declaration of Mt. 28.18 demands a Christological statement to follow it: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me' leads us to expect as a consequence, 'Go and make disciples *unto Me* among all the nations, baptizing them in *My name,* teaching them to observe all *I* commanded you' ... it looks as though the second clause has been modified from a Christological to a trinitarian formula in the interests of the liturgical tradition existing in the Evangelist's day" (Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 83-4).

[657] B. D. Chilton, "James in Relations to Peter, Paul, and Jesus" in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission* (eds. B. Chilton & J. Neusner; Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) 140

[658] Chilton, "James", 140

[659] S. Coakley, "Why Three? Some Further Reflections on the Origins of the Doctrine of the Trinity", in *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine* (eds. S. Coakley & D. A. Pailin; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) 42.

[660] Cf. Chilton, "James", 140

6. Christian Triads

a. Introduction

This section gives an analysis of the role of triads in the Christian tradition, which will show that the first ontological triad occurs in the writings of the "school" of Justin.

We know from the martyr acts that Justin did have pupils and some kind of school; it is possible that he regarded this as paralleling philosophical schools.[661] However, we do not have any writings extant from those pupils mentioned in the martyr acts. Irenaeus states that Tatian was a pupil of Justin and one of his writings is extant. In addition to Tatian, I have included Athenagoras within the "school" of Justin. Despite the lack of biographical information, it has been generally acknowledged that Athenagoras was influenced by Justin and his thought. Parallels have been noted in his apologetic approach; his naming God as ἀγέννητος; and his ideas about the logos, prophetic inspiration, resurrection, demonology and the worship of angels.[662]Sara Parvis writes, "Athenagoras's *Embassy* … is essentially a rewriting of Justin's (first) *Apology* in more intellectually respectable terms".[663]

Whilst it is possible that Tatian and Athenagoras were both pupils of Justin, for my purposes "the "school" of Justin" denotes a grouping of closely dependent thinkers without any presuppositions about the mode of that dependence. Such a grouping allows us to elucidate some issues that are unclear in Justin by seeing how his thought was continued and developed by his close dependents. This is not to rob subsequent thinkers of their originality – and they do innovate – but to focus on a key moment in the Christian tradition when an ontological triad was first being conceived of.

I will note significant methodological concerns about individual thinkers as I proceed, but it may be helpful to draw attention to one major methodological problem: the evidence extant may not be representative. Justin was undoubtedly a significant figure in the history of Christianity, but is his significance overstated by the fact that his works are extant? Eusebius writes of the time of Justin:

> It was at this period that a number of writers flourished in the Church. Hegesippus we have met already. There was also Bishop Dionysius of Corinth and Bishop Pinytus of Crete, as well as Philip, Apolinarius, Melito, Musanus, Modestus, and above all Irenaeus. In every case writings which show their orthodoxy and unshakeable devotion to the apostolic tradition have come into my hands (HE 4.21)

If these writings were available to us, would they be consistent with the thesis I am presenting? Might they highlight some ontological triad independent of Justin and his philosophising? On the other hand, since the works of Theodotus of Byzantium are lost (except for the quotations made by Epiphanius), is it possible that the extant evidence is skewed towards later orthodoxy, as the works selected for preservation were chosen by those who accepted the ascendant orthodoxy? In the absence of evidence it is impossible to answer these questions. The most we can do is be aware of the problem.

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[661] D. Minns & P. Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford: OUP, 2009) 60

[662] D. Rankin, *Athenagoras; Philosopher and Theologian* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 12; L. W. Barnard, *Athenagoras: A Study in Second Century Christian Apologetic* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972) 74;

[663]Parvis, "Apologetic Tradition", 123ff.

b. Justin of Flavia Neapolis

Justin, known as Martyr, is one of the most significant and certainly one of the most studied early Christian writers. From his own writings we learn that Justin was born in Flavia Neapolis (modern Nablus). Though he describes himself as a Samaritan, he was not a God-worshipper, but he appears to have had a Greek education. He was philosopher prior to his conversion. In *Dialogue,* Justin portrays himself as trialling four philosophical schools before encountering an old man who revealed to him the true philosophy (see below); in *Second Apology,* Justin credits his interest in Christianity to the moral integrity of Christians. According to the martyr acts he lived in Rome above a bathhouse and taught there. Since Justin refers to two stays in Rome, Barnard has suggested that he was a travelling teacher. Justin was martyred c.163-168, perhaps at the prompting of the Cynic Crescens.[664]

Three works are extant, though many others were known to Eusebius (HE IV.18.1-6). The *Apologies* are preserved in one codex (*Parisinus Graecus* 450). The completeness of this text is disputed; comparison with Eusebius reveals at least one "great lacuna" and may suggest that the copyist has attempted to cover up other lacunas. Minns and Parvis, in their recent edition, suggest that the extant text is "the result of the attentive, if optimistic, editing and corrections, at some stage in the manuscript tradition of a text that was severely lacunose and corrupt".[665] They hypothesise that the last two chapters of *Second Apology,* corresponding to one folio page, were accidently transposed and should be the last part of *First Apology*.[666] Given the insubstantial nature of *Second Apology,* it has been suggested that it was artificially divided from *First Apology* or that it is nothing more than an appendix. Minns and Parvis have a "cutting-room floor" hypothesis, whereby *Second Apology* is a compilation of "disconnect fragments", which were from previous redactions of *First Apology* or notes used in debates.[667] Whatever the status of *Second Apology,* I will regard these as words of Justin and retain the standard referencing.

The apologies can be dated by their reference to the prefectures of L. Munatius Felix (*First Apology;* 149-154) and Q. Lollius Urbicus (*Second Apology;* 146-160). Due to the prominence of Lucius in *First Apology,* Minns and Parvis date *First Apology* shortly after his quaestorship (c.153).[668] Though Grant classed the *First Apology* as an *epistula,*[669]it is perhaps better seen as a *libellous* in response to the rescript of Hadrian.[670]

It is worth commenting briefly on the relationship between Justin and Aristides, for if the *Apology of Aristides* is authentic and dated correctly to the reign of Hadrian, then Justin is at best the second Christian philosopher and apologist. Sara Parvis has challenged the apologetic character of Aristides' work, demonstrating that it is Justin who has a lasting

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[664] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 32; E. F. Osborn, *Justin Martyr* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973) 6; L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: CUP, 1967) 5-12;
[665] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* vii
[666] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 27-9
[667] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 26-7; P. Parvis, "Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: The Posthumous Creation of the Second Apology", in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (eds. S. Parvis & P. Foster; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) 22-37
[668] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 44
[669] See Grant, "Chronology"
[670] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 24; see D. Minns, "The *Rescript* of Hadrian", in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (eds. S. Parvis & P. Foster; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) 38-49.

impact on the apologetic tradition.[671] Nevertheless Aristide's concerns, which he shares with *Preaching of Peter* and *Epistle to Diognetus* – pagan idolatry, Jewish worship and Christians as a new "race" – are also shared by Justin. Like Aristides, Justin reasons that God must be nameless because he is unbegotten.[672] It is tempting to speculate about some direct influence: if the old man of Justin's conversion story has an historical counterpart, this implies the existence of a Christian, versed in philosophy, who was able to direct Justin's quest. Unfortunately all such considerations must remain speculation, as the records are not available.

Influence of Gnosticism

Since both Valentinus and his pupil Ptolemy are likely to have been in Rome in the mid-second century, and having no small impact on the Christian community, it seems probable that Justin was more than just aware of the Valentinians. It is also probable that they were Sethian Gnostics in Rome around this time. However, being contemporaries is not, of itself, evidence of influence.

Justin writes about a Ptolemy in his *Second Apology,* who is the Christian teacher of a woman of some status. This woman divorces her pagan husband who in revenge denounces Ptolemy as a Christian (2 Apol 2). Some scholars have identified this martyr Ptolemy (J) with the Valentinian Ptolemy (V). Lampe, noting that Ptolemy is not a common name in second century Rome, advances the argument that the relationship between Ptolemy (V) and Flora, as indicated by his letter to her, fits the relationship between Ptolemy (J) and the divorced woman. He notes in particular that Ptolemy (V)'s letter deals specifically with the question of divorce.[673] Against the identification, it may be argued that it seems improbable that Justin would write favourably of a Valentinian, since he condemns them as heretics (Dial 35.6).[674] Lampe has proposed that perhaps this denouncement is Justin's later view and that he did not regard Valentinians as heretics when writing his apologies.[675] It may even be that Justin was more sympathetic towards Valentinianism than has been previously supposed.[676] Yet even if Justin is referring to Ptolemy (V) this may not imply any sympathy with his views; Moll has proposed that perhaps Justin was just using this story since it supported his case.[677]

Justin declared "I would not have believed the Lord himself, if he had announced any other God than the fashioner and maker" (fr. 2 = AH 4.6), making it unlikely that he would be sympathetic with any scheme that posited a demiurge distinct and independent from God (let alone an evil demiurge). It seems difficult to see how this antithesis could have been overcome to the extent that Justin would have engaged receptively with Gnostic thought.

Influence of Philosophy

Justin describes himself as a philosopher (cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Valen* 5.1) and as wearing a philosopher's gown (cf. HE 4.11.7). Yet modern scholars have not always endorsed

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[671] Parvis, "Apologetic Tradition", 115-127

[672] E. R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968) 130

[673] P. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus; Christians at Rome in the first two centuries* (London: T&T Clark, 2003) 239. It is interesting that Ptolemy deals with the question of divorce from the perspective of a female divorcing her husband rather than a man divorcing his wife as in Matt 19:8 (cf. S. Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 15).

[674]Cf. Minns & Parvis, *Justin*, 43.

[675]Lampe, *Paul to Valentinus*, 240n.

[676]Cf. M. J. Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (Ashgate, 2009) 41.

[677]Moll, *Marcion*, 15.

these claims; both Barnard[678] and Goodenough[679] credit Justin with only a limited knowledge of philosophy. Part of the reason for such comments is Goodenough's conviction that Justin adopted his themes from Hellenistic Judaism, not Platonic philosophy.[680] More recently, scholars have been more charitable about Justin's knowledge of Middle Platonism, but have differed over the extent to which he was influenced by it. For example, de Vogel writes "Justin did not only know something about Greek philosophy and used it; *he passed judgment upon it*".[681] Similarly van Winden writes "Justin's philosophical ideas originate in the Middle Platonism of his days. But the mode and content of the discussion present a well-balanced treatise by an independent mind".[682] Edwards shifts position, previously concluding that "his apologetic writing leaves no doubt that he knew, understood, and had partly ingested the principal teachings of the Platonic school",[683] and later writing, "so far as one who wrote in Greek could do so, he avoided even the use of that philosophy with which he was so thoroughly acquainted".[684]

Perhaps the key element in the dispute over the influence of Greek philosophy is that of Justin's doctrine of the Logos. Many scholars, not least Andresen in his *Logos und Nomos,* have regarded Justin's Logos as the second Platonic principle. But recent scholarship into Judaism, and the Wisdom literature in particular, has called into question the philosophical origins of the concept. Price writes, "New Testament scholars assure us that the occurrence of this term as a divine name in the prologue to the Gospel of John cannot be due to the influence of Greek philosophy; is the position any different in the case of Justin?"[685] Similarly, Edwards has argued that the Logos can be sufficiently explained by reference to biblical and Judaic sources.[686] Edwards presents six objections to a Platonist source of the Logos, which may be summarised as follows, and which I will answer briefly:[687]

1. The Platonists did not use "Logos" as the name for the cosmic demiurge (cf. John 1:1-3)
2. Justin claims that Plato derived his philosophy from casual acquaintance with the scriptures
3. Unlike contemporary Platonists, Justin denies that the human mind has innate communion with God (Dial 4.2)
4. There is no Platonic precedent for the phrase ἔμφυτος λόγος (2 Apol 13.5; cf. James 1:21)
5. Justin does not follow the Platonic ethical aim "to be like God"
6. Unlike the Platonic second principle, Justin's Logos is personal

[678] Barnard, *Justin*, 4
[679] Goodenough, *Justin,* 62, 175
[680] Goodenough, *Justin,* 124
[681] C. J. De Vogel, "Problems concerning Justin Martyr: Did Justin find a certain continuity between Greek Philosophy and Christian Faith?". *Mnemosyne* 31:4 (1978) 365 (original emphasis).
[682] J. C. M. van Winden, *An Early Christian Philosopher: Justin's Dialogue with Trypho, chapters one to nine* (Leiden: Brill, 1971) 126
[683] M. J. Edwards, "On the Platonic Schooling of Justin Martyr", *JTS* 42:1 (1991) 17
[684] M. J. Edwards, "Justin's Logos and the Word of God", *JECS* 3:3 (1995) 278
[685] R. M. Price, "'Hellenization' and Logos Doctrine in Justin Martyr", *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988) 20
[686] Edwards, "Justin's Logos", 261-280
[687] Edwards, "Justin's Logos", 272-5

The first of these claims is, at least, disputed; Dillon has argued that Plutarch makes use of this concept (see above).[688] In any case, whilst the name "Logos" can be located in John 1, Justin's doctrine of the Logos cannot. Similarly, whilst the phrase ἔμφυτος λόγος occurs in the NT (4), the concept of "implanted, natural ideas" (ἔμφυτοι φυσικαί ἔννοιαι) is Platonic.[689] The latter objections (5,6) would be fatal to the thesis that Justin was dyed-in-the-wool Platonist, but are compatible with the thesis that Justin's thought is some mixture of Christian and Platonic traditions. Where Justin's thought diverges from biblical ideas, it is legitimate to explore a Platonic origin for these ideas. For our purposes it is the second objection that is the most interesting, because it may be less favourable to Edward's argument. To use an analogy, Numenius, though he considered himself as Pythagorean, was happy to derive his thought from the writings of Plato because he believed that Plato had sourced his doctrines from Pythagoras. Though the analogy is imperfect, as Justin is sometimes more pejorative about Plato, it is possible that a Christian who believed that Plato had sourced his doctrines from the prophets would likewise make free to use the writings of Plato.

Justin adopts a theory of the history of philosophy common to his contemporaries, particularly the Middle Platonists.[690] According to Hyldahl, Posidonius in his *Protrepticus* proposed the concept of a primordial philosophy from which later philosophers deviated.[691]Others have exampled Antiochus of Ascalon and Numenius of Apamea, who held that philosophers have deviated from the original purity of a particular philosophical school.[692] Justin presents a similar theory, comparing the various philosophical schools with Christian heresies (Dial 35.6; 1 Apol 26.6).[693] Since the prophets predate the philosophers, Justin believes he has good chronological credentials for the primacy of Christianity, a theme not unknown in Judaism.[694] As Droge explains, Justin seems to have indirectly inherited the "pan-Egyptian" theory of culture from Hecataeus of Abdera, whereby all prominient Greeks came to Egypt to learn from the Egyptian priests; it was only a minor variant on the thesis to claim that instead, they learnt from the books supposedly left behind by Moses.[695] The concept of non-Greek antecedents for Platonic doctrine was also common amongst Justin's Middle Platonist contemporaries; Boys-Stones argued that the Christian apologists adopted their "dependency" theme from the Platonic model.[696] Apuleius claimed that Plato had studied in Egypt and desired to visit the Indians and the Magi; Numenius thought it possible to coordinate Platonic philosophy with oriental sources.[697] We should not ignore the statement ascribed to Numenius, "what is Plato but Moses in Attic Greek?" - this could also have been found on the lips of Justin.[698] In addition to this theory of the history of

[688] Dillon, "Logos and Trinity", 4;
[689] C. Andresen, "Justin und der mittlere Platonismus", *ZNW* 44 (1952) 170-77; A. J. Droge, "Justin Martyr and the Restoration of Philosophy", *Church History* 56:3 (1987) 314;
[690] Droge, "Restoration", 305; van Winden, *Early Christian Philosopher*, 2
[691] N. Hyldahl, *Philosophie und Christentum* (Munksgaard, 1996) 112-140; see de Vogel, "Problems", 380
[692] de Vogel, "Problems", 384; Droge, "Restoration", 317
[693] van Winden, *Early Christian Philosopher*, 43
[694] Droge, "Restoration", 307
[695] Droge, "Restoration", 311
[696]G. R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of Its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: OUP, 2001). See especially 184-188 for his comments on Justin.
[697] Droge, "Restoration", 318
[698] This declaration by Numenius (assuming it is authentic) is intriguing because he appears to single out Moses, rather than, say, Zoroaster. It is interesting to speculate whether Justin knew this reference because if he had it would have only lent justification for taking Christian doctrine from the works of Plato (Droge, "Restoration", 312)

philosophy, Justin also believes that the philosophers and poets had access to divine truth through the inspiration of the Logos.[699] Whilst Justin does not believe that Plato (and the other philosophers) possessed "irrefutable knowledge", because Plato's teachings did not always "coincide" with those of Christ, he nevertheless makes bold to claim that "whatever things were rightly said among all men belong to us Christians" (2 Apol 13.2-4). For this reason, he asserts that Socrates and Heraclitus were Christians, inasmuch as they lived "with Logos" (1 Apol 46.3-4; cf. 1 Apol 5.3-4; 2 Apol 10.5-8).[700] These are not the statements of one who eschewed all reference to philosophy, but one looking to establish continuity between Platonism and Christianity. As Osborn summarises, "Justin's sources for this theology were scripture and Plato. In the end they were the one source".[701]

Justin's view on the compatibility and continuity of Platonism with Christianity is shown in his account of his conversion in the early chapters of the *Dialogue.* Some scholars have defended the historicity of this account,[702] whilst others have considered it a literary device, paralleling other contemporary writings.[703] In fairness, Justin does not claim to have studied with all four schools; only the Stoics and Platonists, which would match the philosophical background of his writings, but, as various scholars have noted, the criticisms that he makes are familiar from contemporaries.[704] Reading this account as the mature opinions of Justin is arguably more informative, particularly regarding the deficiency he perceives in Platonism and the grounds on which he adopts Christianity. "Justin keeps his ground in metaphysics ... and in a good part of anthropology".[705] Where he finds deficiency in Platonism and why, on this account, he adopts Christianity is concerned with the immortality of the soul (something that was debated amongst the Platonists in any case; cf. Didask 25.6).[706]

This is not to claim that Justin's conversion was not genuine (it was), or that he was not primarily intent on following Christian teaching (he was), or that he did not reject some Platonic teachings (he did). But Justin was also seeking to find concordance between Platonism and Christianity, and ascribed the concordance to both acquaintance with the scriptures and the inspiration of the Logos. Under such presuppositions, it is possible (even likely) that he may have taken on concepts that, though seemingly compatible, were unbiblical. An example will illustrate the point. In Dial 3.5 Justin defines God as Being. Such a notion is not incompatible with Christianity (cf. Ex 3:14 [LXX]), but the immediate source for this definition is Platonism (cf. Phaedo 78c, Sophist 248a, Rep VI.484b).[707] "What is interesting in Justin's 'definition of God' in *Dial.*3,5 is, first, that the formula is perfectly Platonic ... secondly, that it is accepted by the old man with pleasure".[708] For Justin, whatever their disagreements, both Platonism and Christianity were concerned with the same truth. Or, to put it another way, Justin is happy to describe Christianity in terms of Platonic ontology.

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[699] Droge, "Restoration", 307
[700] de Vogel, "Problems", 361-2; Droge, "Restoration", 306
[701] Osborn, *Justin,* 17
[702] Osborn, *Justin,* 7
[703]Goodenough, *Justin,* 58-9; also see van Winden, *Early Christian Philosopher*
[704] Atticus, Lucian (Goodenough, *Justin,* 59-60); Middle Platonists (Andresen); Cynics (Hyldahl)
[705] de Vogel, "Problems", 381
[706] Droge, "Restoration", 306
[707] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 60
[708] de Vogel, "Problems", 388

Since Justin studied as a Platonist, it is worth trying to identify what sort(s) of Platonism he was familiar with. Previously, scholars held that Justin was influenced by Philo.[709] Though a minority have adopted this position,[710] the majority of modern scholars have moved away from it. Barnard, analysing the titles of the Logos shared by Justin and Philo, concludes that the parallels are due to shared use of the OT.[711] Osborn, commenting on the exegesis of OT passages, notes how few similarities there are between Justin and Philo.[712] In any case, many scholars now doubt that the writings of Philo were known beyond Alexandria during this period. Having surveyed modern scholarships, Runia concludes that it is difficult to establish any connection.[713]

The closest point of comparison for Justin amongst the Middle Platonists is Numenius, as has been acknowledged by many scholars.[714] We have already noted several similarities, such as Numenius' history of philosophy and of oriental sources (see above). One intriguing parallel is the analogy of one lamp lit from another (Dial 61; cf. fr.14). Whilst Justin is describing the begetting of the Son, Numenius is describing the divine gift of knowledge – it is Eusebius who presents Numenius as though he were talking about the procession of the Second Cause. Edwards (1991) lists a succession of parallels, including the "tincture of Stoicisim", the concept of two aspects of divinity (transcendent and manifest), the use of dialogue form,[715] salvation through contemplation of rational entity, and Hermes as representing the interpretative Word (1 Apol 22.2; cf. Numenius, fr.57).[716] Perhaps the most intriguing parallels Edwards draws, given his later article, are those regarding the spermatic logos;[717] "it is only Platonism like that of Numenius which allows the spermatic logos to be outside man and below the highest Deity, while yet commingling the human and divine".[718] Thus despite the fragmentary witness to Numenius, we can mount a significant case in favour of his influence upon Justin. Geographically speaking, some direct acquaintance is possible, either in Syria or in Rome. It is chronology that is prohibitive if a floruit of c.150 is conjectured; "Numenius could hardly have founded a school in Rome or in Apamea before the composition of Justin's First Apology".[719] If Justin's conversion is dated as early as 130s, then it would seem to imply that Justin engaged with the philosophy of Numenius whilst already a Christian. Alternatively, we could take Numenius to be an exemplar of a certain strand of Platonic philosophy with which Justin engages; "Justin stands in that line which can be traced back from Plotinus through his most famous and important predecessor, Numenius of Apamea".[720]

Finally, we may briefly comment on Justin's impact on pagan philosophers, as this may have a bearing on Justin's post-conversion engagement with philosophy. We know from

[709] Goodenough, *Justin*, 138
[710] See Gaston, "Early Apologists", 574-6; M. Hillar, "Numenius and the Hellenistic Source of the Central Christian Doctrine", *JRR* 14:1 (2007) 10-11
[711] Barnard, *Justin*, 93-6
[712] Osborn, *Justin*, 97
[713] D. T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian* Literature (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 104. Runia does mention the possibility that Philo influenced Justin indirectly through Numenius (97).
[714] Dillon, "Logos and Trinity", 6; Hillar, "Numenius", 3-31; Droge, "Restoration", 310; cf. Minns & Parvis, *Justin*, 59
[715] Edwards, "Platonic Schooling", 22
[716] Edwards, "Platonic Schooling", 29
[717] Edwards, "Platonic Schooling", 26ff
[718] Edwards, "Platonic Schooling", 32
[719] Edwards, "Platonic Schooling", 30-1
[720] Edwards, "Platonic Schooling", 21

his own words, and from the testimony of Tatian, that he engaged the Cynic philosopher Crescens in debate. There are hints elsewhere that this was not his only debate (cf. Dial 50.1; 64.2). Andresen is followed by many in identifying Justin as the prompt for Celsus' *True Discourse.*[721] If this is true, then it is a testament to Justin's abilities that he incited this philosopher to react.

Justin on God

For Justin, the goal of philosophy is God, or more specifically Being, which is to be identified with God (Dial 3.5).[722] The pre-conversion Justin presents his definition of God as "that which always maintains the same nature, and in the same manner, and is the cause of all other things", a definition the old man receives with pleasure. It follows from this definition, says the old man, that God is "unbegotten and incorruptible", whilst everything else is "created and corruptible" – apparently configuring his ontology according to the Platonic distinction of Being and Becoming. Further, the old man argues, there is only one unbegotten, because whatever is unbegotten will be equal to any other unbegotten thing in power and in honour, and therefore they would be the same. Thus there is one God, who is unbegotten and unchanging, and the cause of all things (Dial 5). In this matter, the old man and the pre-conversion Justin are in agreement with their Middle Platonic contemporaries. The post-conversion Justin is of the same opinion regarding the nature of God, who he describes as "the unchangeable and eternal God and begetter of all" (1 Apol 13.4). His favoured designation for God is "unbegotten" (cf. 1 Apol 14:1; 2 Apol 6:1; etc.); in one place "the only unbegotten God" (1 Apol 14:1), presumably distinguishing this God from other god(s). To this negative attribute he adds "impassible" (1 Apol 25:2), unnameable (1 Apol 10:1; 2 Apol 6:1)[723], and "inexpressible" (ἄρρητον; 2 Apol 12:4). God is not composite (Dial 5.2, 4). Perhaps unexpectedly, Justin does not deny God form, but rather ascribes to him an ineffable form (1 Apol 9.3); his point is primarily against the making of idols - nevertheless, one might have expected Justin to be more precise.

The post-conversion Justin also agrees that the one God must be identified with the cause of all things. In a fragment preserved by Irenaeus, Justin says that he "would not have believed the Lord himself, if he had announced any other God than the fashioner and maker", implying his Christian faith was conditional on the coherence of the teaching of Jesus with this doctrine (fr. 2 = AH 4.6). Whilst one might suspect some rhetorical flourish in this polemic against Marcion, it does highlight that the identity of the one God as the first cause both preceded and conditioned his conversion to Christianity. Yet unlike some of his contemporaries, Justin seems to insist upon the identity of the first cause with the world-creator, seemingly disqualifying a secondary demiurge. He consistently identifies God as the Creator (δημιουργὸν - 1 Apol 13:1; γεννήτορα – 1 Apol 13:4; κτίστης – 2 Apol 6.2). This is in part due to the OT, as he acknowledges when he identifies his God with the God of Trypho (Dial 11), but his use of the phrase "Father and Maker" (1 Apol 8:2; 63:11) implies a Platonic precedent (cf. *Timaeus*).[724] In maintaining that Father and Maker are the same, Justin sides with one group of Platonists against another, in favour of Christianity.

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[721] M. Slusser, "Justin Scholarship: Trends and Trajectories", in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (eds. S. Parvis & P. Foster; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) 15; Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 70;
[722] Goodenough, *Justin,* 64
[723] God is nameless because he is unbegotten (cf. Aristides; cf. Tim 28c)
[724] Osborn, *Justin,* 19

The sharp distinction Justin draws between unbegotten (= God) and begotten (= creation) has profound implications both for his interpretation of scripture and his epistemology. He says to Trypho, "you must not imagine that the unbegotten God himself came down or went up from any place. For the ineffable Father and Lord of all neither has come to any place ... but remains in his own place ... he is not moved or confined to a spot in the whole world" (Dial 127; cf. Dial 56; 60; cf. 1 Apol 63; cf. Didask. 28.3). God did not visit Abraham, or speak to Moses, or interact directly with any of the prophets; someone else, bearing the name "God", did these things. The proposal that an intermediary was active in these theophanies would not of itself have been controversial; it is implied in both OT and NT, and Trypho himself acknowledges the role of the Angel of the Lord (cf. Dial 60).[725] The operative issue is that Justin claims that God is by nature unmoved and does not interact with the world (cf. Didask 10.7; cf. Numenius, fr. 12.13-14). Justin does not (in any extant statement) appear to infer from this that God could not create directly, but does see the implications for epistemology. Justin presents his pre-converted self as naively supposing that his pursuit of Platonic philosophy would lead him to "look upon God" (Dial 2). The old man dashes these hopes, arguing that the soul has no intrinsic affinity with God (Dial 4). He begins from the temporality of the world, which Justin, like some Middle Platonists, accepts and follows from the distinction between unbegotten and begotten. From this foundation, he argues that the souls cannot be immortal but must likewise be created, and thus have no affinity with the unbegotten God (Dial 5). The solution that the old man proposes for this epistemic problem is revelation through the prophets who achieve knowledge of God by the inspiration of the divine spirit (Dial 7).

Yet Justin does not rely solely on prophetic inspiration to bridge the gap between God and man, nor does he abandon entirely the Platonic concept of some innate access to the divine. In one aspect, Justin's Logos doctrine can be viewed as an attempt to reconcile the (Platonic) concept of innate knowledge with disjunction between unbegotten and begotten (2 Apol 13:5); Justin's theology, whilst not pure Platonism, is not unphilosophic.

The first principles of Platonism were God, Matter and the Forms.[726] Justin asserts that God created all things from "unformed matter" (1 Apol 10.2). Here, Justin sees concordance between Plato (Tim 50d) and Moses (Gen 1:2), stating that the former depends upon the latter (1 Apol 59.1-4). According to Justin God "changed" matter into the world (cf. 1 Apol 67.8). Justin does not refer explicitly to the creation of matter, yet since he identifies uncreated Being with God, "it is a reasonable inference that Justin must have supposed that the formless matter was itself created".[727] Referring to "previously existing things" as προϋποκειμένων (1 Apol 5.5), he seems to imply pre-established things rather than eternal things. Justin only refers to the Forms once when describing his pre-conversion interest in Platonism, saying "the contemplation of Ideas furnished my mind with wings" (Dial 2). He makes no use of the concept in his writings, though Justin does not present us with a cosmological treatise or even a detailed

[725] For example, Hosea 12:4 asserts that Jacob wrestled with an angel (cf. Gen 32:22-32) and Hebrews 13:2 implies that it was angels that spoke to Abraham (cf. Gen 18).
[726] Atticus fr.26; Alcinous, *Didask.* 8.1; 9.1; 10.1; Apuleius, *De Platone* 1.5; Hippolytus, *Ref* 1.16; Aëtius 1.3.21 = Diels *Dox.* 287a17-288a6
[727] D. Minns, "Justin Martyr", in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (ed. L. P. Gerson; Cambridge: CUP, 2010) 265

epistemology. By identifying God as Being, Justin may have identified God as the totality of the Forms (or the Forms as the thoughts of God). Yet it is also possible that Justin thought the concept of the Forms was redundant, as the true reality was found solely in God. Without a more expansive cosmogony it is difficult to be conclusive.

Justin on the Logos

Justin has two objectives in presenting his arguments regarding the Logos. To his pagan audience, Justin seeks to justify giving "the second place … to a crucified man" (1 Apol 13.4).[728] In his dialogue with Judaism, Justin seeks to justify the worship of Jesus, though he is distinct from God. He can accomplish both purposes by identifying Jesus as the first power of God, the Logos. Yet the Logos is not a mere apologetic convenience; underlying Justin's works is a considered Logos-doctrine.

As mentioned above, Justin perceives two related problems deriving from the transcendence of God. Firstly, God cannot interact directly with the world, and secondly, God cannot be known directly by humans. In this sense, Justin is grappling with a problem familiar to all philosophical schools: how to reconcile the transcendence and immanence of God.[729] This problem is, perhaps, more challenging for Justin because by his own account, his conversion was predicated on a rejection of the immortality of the soul and consequently the affinity of human souls with God (Dial 5). His solution to this problem, whilst including other powers like angels, centres on a power he calls "Logos".

Justin had in Hellenistic Judaism resources to reconcile the transcendence and immanence of God, particularly in the concept of Wisdom (cf. Dial 62). From the Johannine tradition, if not directly from the gospel itself, Justin had precedent for naming this intermediary "Logos" and identifying Jesus as its incarnation. Yet Justin does not cut-and-paste the Johannine Logos into his writings, but expands the concept to include his concept of the λόγος σπερματικός (2 Apol 8.3; 13.3).[730]

Edwards has argued that in Justin, unlike in Stoicism or Platonism,[731] the λόγος σπερματικός refers to something sown, rather than something that will grow; by linking the seed with the activity of Christ, Justin uses λόγος σπερματικός to describe Christ's role in sowing the word – an extension of the parable of the Sower (Matt 13.8ff and par).[732] However, for Justin the Logos is not strictly speaking the gospel message, but the rational power of God (Dial 61) through whom human beings get knowledge of Being (i.e. God; cf. 2 Apol 13.5). The seed of the Logos is implanted in the whole human race (1 Apol 32.8; 2 Apol 8.1), and through this seed each person is able to see "what is

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[728] This apologetic may be in response to sneers of the kind represented in Lucian, *Death of Peregrinus* 13-14.

[729] Goodenough, *Justin*, 139

[730] The same term was used in Stoicism in reference to the supposed gaseous element in sexual reproduction, and by extension to God as the active element in matter (Goodenough, *Justin*, 161). Justin does not use this concept. Similar spermatic language has been adduced in Philo (Quest in Ex 11.68), Cicero, Arius Didymus, Apuleius and others, enabling a plausible narrative of the evolution of this term from Stoicism to Justin via Platonism (Goodenough, *Justin*, 162; Barnard, *Justin*, 86, 98). However, it is possible that Justin uses the term in express defiance of the Stoics, insinuating that they have only partial knowledge of the whole spermatic logos (2 Apol 8.1-3;Edwards, "Justin's Logos", 277). In any case, it is unhelpful to merely match terms and not concepts; Justin's *spermatic logos* is not Stoic.

[731]Thrasyllus describe the logos as "holy knowledge" hidden within the cosmos "as it were in seeds" (cf. Tarrant, *Thrasyllan Platonism*, 110ff). He is describing how the Forms give definition to things, rather than how human souls achieve knowledge of God.

[732] Edwards, "Justin's Logos", 274, 277

connatural [συγγενὲς] to it" (i.e. Christ; cf. 2 Apol 13.3). Justin explains that the seed of the Logos is not the same as the Logos, as an imitation of something is not the same as the thing imitated (2 Apol 13.6). But through the seed the Logos is in everything (2 Apol 10.8). The imitation of the true logos seems to be identified as human reason, since Justin appears to equate the insights of philosophers achieved by reason (2 Apol 10.2) with access to λόγος σπερματικός (2 Apol 13.3) and Socrates' rational enquires (2 Apol 10.6) with knowledge of the Logos (2 Apol 10.8).[733] If, then, the seed of the Logos is human reason, then we seem to be on Platonic territory; though Justin has forsaken the view that human souls have an affinity with God, he seems to be arguing that acquaintance with God is possible through our share of the divine reason.

Here Numenius is instructive. He says that knowledge is not only a gift of God but has the same essence in both God and humans (fr.14). Eusebius implies that this passage follows on from the preceding quotation (*Pr.ev.*XI.18.15), in which Numenius describes the sowing of souls (fr.13). Numenius seems to identify the First God with the seeds, and explains that in this way all things participate with the First God. His comments on the gift of knowledge are a reasonable extension of the participation humans have through the soul. Whilst Justin has abandoned the view that human souls have an affinity with God and so would reject the identification of souls with God; his identification of human reason with the Logos could be viewed as modification of this position. This would also explain how Justin came to adopt Numenius' analogy for the gift of knowledge (one lamp lit from another) to describe the procession of the Logos (Dial 61), and why Eusebius believes Numenius is describing the emanation of the Second Cause. Identifying the Logos as reason (both divine and human), Justin has taken a Platonic resolution to the problem of the transcendence and immanence of God and overwritten it with John's Word. Consequently, Jesus is identified as the rational faculty of God.

For Justin, the Logos is the Son of God, not because he was born of a virgin, but because he proceeded from God (cf. 2 Apol 6.3). Like Numenius, Justin is happy to use the language of fatherhood to describe the procession of the second from the first (cf. fr.12; fr.21). The Logos is "the first-begotten of the unbegotten God" (1 Apol 53.2); he is begotten by an act of will of the Father (Dial 61). Justin gives a couple of analogies to exclude some misunderstandings of his position. The Logos proceeds like a spoken word, which does not entail dividing the source, and like one flame lit from another, which does not entail reducing the source. Yet whilst Justin frequently describes the Logos as begotten, he is reluctant to describe him as created. He quotes Prov 8:21ff LXX, which includes the word "created", but Justin "quietly ignores" this when interpreting the passage.[734] The most he will say is that the Logos is "the firstborn of every creature" (Dial 85) and was begotten "before all created things" (Dial 129). "While the logic of Justin's argument requires that the Logos cannot be, like God, *agen(n)ētos,* it is not clear whether or in what sense being 'begotten' of God differs from being created, except that it is said that God begot him from himself as a rational power before all the creatures (*ktismatōn*)".[735] This ambivalence may be explained by comparison with Numenius, who is also reluctant to equate procession with creation. For Numenius, the

[733] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 65-6. It is worth noting that the concept of the *spermatic logos* is found the second apology. If, following Minns & Parvis, the second apology is really a collection of fragments "from the cutting room floor" then it is arguable that this does not necessarily represent Justin's considered opinion.
[734] Goodenough, *Justin,* 147
[735] Minns, "Justin Martyr", 264

second imitates the first, whereas created things are fashioned by their Forms; the second, as the intellect which contemplates the Forms, could not come into being by the same process. Similarly Justin, whilst making no use of the Forms, describes the Logos as an ἀρχή ("Beginning"; Dial 61[736]), begotten by God before all creatures.

Justin believes that Jesus can rightly be called "God" (1 Apol 63.15), "second" after the Father (1 Apol 13.3-4; 60.7), and "another God" (Dial 50; 55; 56). Numenius could have had no reservations about positing a second god, but we might assume that Justin, who affirms the *Shema* (cf. 1 Apol 16.6) and rebuked Marcion (1 Apol 26.5), had reason for reservations about positing a second. On the contrary, Justin is keen to argue in favour of another power called "God", because for Justin this answers the problem of the immanence of God. Yet, as we shall see, Justin reserves a special distinction for the first God over the second.

Justin adopts two main lines of defence for positing another god: the argument from theophanies (Dial 60-61; cf. 1 Apol 63.1-17) and the argument from the plurality of persons in OT texts (Dial 62; e.g. Gen 1:25; Prov 8:21f).[737] Justin was probably not the first to employ these arguments,[738] but Hellenised Judaism stopped short of identifying Wisdom or the Angel of the Lord as another God. This raises the possibility that Justin has other motives for interpreting these OT texts in this way. He argues that the Son "being the first-born Logos of God, is also God" (1 Apol 63.15).[739] Yet one might suspect that analogical sonship does not necessarily entail divinity; Justin does not accord deity to all the powers of God. The special function of the Logos, inasmuch as it imparts knowledge of God, might be seen as justification for ascribing deity. This presupposes a specific ontological conception of what qualifies as a god. As discussed above, Justin's ontology seems to entail that only Being is God, and yet there are reasons for thinking the Son does not qualify, as he is not unbegotten. One could infer from Numenius that to be a god is to be a transcendent mind; this definition would qualify the Logos for deity ("a rational being"; Dial 62).

The other motivation for positing a second god may be to find concordance with Plato regarding the "coming god" (= World Soul; 1 Apol 60.1-5; cf. Tim 36b, 34ab).[740] Justin's supposed convergence here is quite stretched. He argues that Plato read the account of the bronze serpent (cf. Num 21:8) and took from it the association of a cross-shape with the Son of God, though it seems impossible to make such an association without reference to Christian interpretation (cf. John 3:14-15). It may be that Justin could not resist finding some connection between the cross-shape in the *Timaeus* and the cross of Christ.[741] On the other hand, he may have had prior motivation for equating the

[736] It is possible that Justin was aware of the well-attested Christian interpretation of Genesis 1:1 that reads "in the Son" for "in the beginning". See W. Rutherford, "*Altercatio Jasonis et Papisci* as a Testimony Source for Justin's 'Second God' Argument?", in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (eds. S. Parvis & P. Foster; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) 143). Also see Philo, De Confus Ling 146; Leg. Al. 1.43 (Goodenough, *Justin*, 169).
[737] Goodenough, *Justin*, 143-5
[738] See O. Skarsaune, The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theologial Profile (NovTSupp 66; Leiden: Brill, 1987) 234-42); cf. Rutherford, "Jasonis et Papisci", 137-144.
[739] Barnard, *Justin*, 88; Osborn, *Justin*, 30; Minns & Parvis, *Justin*, 61
[740] Droge, "Restoration", 309 (following Andresen)
[741] Given the weakness of Justin's argument here, we might wonder whether Justin is serious. It is possible that he is playing the game of the Sophists.

Son with the World Soul. Justin identifies the World Soul as the second power (implied 1 Apol 60.5); there are only two gods to be found in the *Timaeus,* unless one divides "father and maker", which Justin does not.

Having said all this, Barnard is misleading when he writes "it is equally clear that Justin believed in the full Divinity of the Son".[742] Though Justin never explicitly names the Logos "Becoming", he does almost as much by ascribing to him change. More significantly, Justin's favoured description for God - ἀγέννητον - is not, and cannot be, given to the Son.[743] He explicitly rejects the idea that the Logos is "indivisible and inseparable" from the Father, like light from the sun, arguing that the Logos is "numerically distinct" (ἕτερος ἀριθμῷ; Dial 128).[744] Both Goodenough and Barnard claim that ἕτερος ἀριθμῷ means "different in person",[745] but this phrase will not bear the Trinitarian (or binitarian) weight these scholars place upon it. Justin explains that he considers the other god to be unified in will with the maker, in that he has never done anything that the maker did not wish to do, but is a distinct power (Dial 56).[746] As we have seen, it is precisely because of their different natures that the Logos can speak to Moses from the burning bush and God cannot. Justin is clear that the Logos is a separate substance from God, and it is in this way that Justin feels he can maintain one (unbegotten) God (= Being), whilst positing a second (begotten) God (= Becoming; cf. Numenius, fr.16).

This separation of natures underlies for Justin the subordination of the Son (cf. 1 Apol 20:2), a concept he found ample precedent for in the Christian (and Platonic) tradition. For instance, whilst God is unnameable (because there was no-one prior to name him), the Logos is named "Christ" and, after his incarnation, "Jesus" (2 Apol 6.1-4). Regarding monolatry he cites Mark 10:17-18 (or pars); to "God" he adds "who made all things", which for Justin denotes the Father (1 Apol 16.7). Elsewhere, he is more explicit than this, saying that this "other God" was also "subject to" the Creator, and receives his commissions from "the Lord who remains in the heavens" (Dial 56): as Goodenough writes, this is "quite the reverse of asserting equality of rank".[747]

If Justin, following Numenius, identifies God as (the principle of) Being and the Logos as the principle of Becoming, then we might expect Justin to identify the Logos as the Demiurge but, being committed to the idea that God alone is the Creator, he cannot do so. Justin does not give a cosmogony, but there are a handful of passages in Justin which would seem to indicate a demiurgic function for the Logos.[748] At 2 Apol 6.3 we find the

[742] Barnard, *Justin,* 100
[743] Osborn, *Justin,* 21
[744] Goodenough seems to miss this point, when he supposes that Justin (like Philo) endorsed the analogy of light from the sun. Goodenough urges the Logos is "no sense independent of the Father", which seems the opposite of Justin's explicit statement (Goodenough, *Justin,* 148-150). As Minns responds, "when Justin says that the Logos was begotten from the Father by the Father's power and will, and not by abscission (Dial 128.4), this is to eliminate any suggestion that the divine substance (*ousia*) is divided or altered; it is not to make a claim of substantial unity of the Logos with God" (Minns, "Justin Martyr", 264).
[745] Goodenough, *Justin,* 146; Barnard, *Justin,* 89
[746] Minns, "Justin Martyr", 264.
[747] Goodenough, *Justin,* 155
[748] At 1 Apol 59.5 he says "the whole world came into being by a word of God" – since the definite article is absent it may only refer to a creative word (Gen 1:3), rather than to the Logos. The article is also absent in 1 Apol 66.2, here referring the incarnation of Jesus "by means of a word of God". Here "a word of God" is contrasted with "a word of prayer", referring to the eucharistic prayer. The contrast supports the

statement, "in the beginning he adorned and created all things through him", i.e. the Logos. Minns and Parvis argue that this is a gloss,[749] though the authenticity of the phrase would not seem problematic. A stronger statement is found in 1 Apol 64.5, which might be rendered, "God conceived and made the world by the Logos". Minns and Parvis argue that emphasis of the sentence is upon God creating purposively, rather than indicating the agency of the Logos, giving the translation "God made the world, of which he formed a notion through the Logos";[750] on this reading, the Logos is noetic (i.e. the vehicle of the intelligible creation) but not demiurgic. In the same passage, Justin presents the myth of Athena, proceeding from Zeus as his first thought, as maliciously inspired by demons, corrupting the truth about creation (1 Apol 64.5; cf. Tatian, *Or* 5). Justin dismisses this myth as "most laughable", because Thought is represented as a woman (cf. Gnosticism). To make sense of the comparison requires that the Logos parallel Athena in her creative activity, which would argue in favour of the former rendering. On this rendering, creation is a two stage process: first God conceives the thought of the world and secondly, God creates the world – both stages are mediated through the Logos. Thus the Logos would appear to be both noetic and demiurgic, but God is the Creator.

Justin on the Spirit

To repeat Goodenough's over-quoted phrase, "there is no doctrine of Justin more baffling than his doctrine of the Holy Spirit".[751] The problem being addressed is that Justin seems to equate the Holy Spirit with the Logos whilst also regarding it as something distinct. The conclusion of many scholars has been that Justin's view of the Spirit came either from confusion[752] or from topical convenience.[753] However, before adopting such conclusions, we need to explore whether there is any consistent idea behind Justin's words. As Bucur explains, Justin's theology is not reducible to the Logos and his scheme includes angels and other powers. [754]

Cursory examination would suggest that the primary function of the Holy Spirit in Justin's writings is prophetic inspiration. As already discussed, Justin ascribes revelation to the Logos; this includes prophetic inspiration (1 Apol 36.1; 2 Apol 10.8; cf. 1 Apol 33.9[755]). Just as the Spirit speaks under different personae (1 Apol 38.1; 44.1; 47.1), so speaks the Logos (1 Apol 36.1-2). Briggman adduces five verbs that are used to describe

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translation "a word of God", else the latter phrase would need be rendered "prayer to the Logos", which seems unlikely (cf. Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 257n2).

[749] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 63-4, 287n3

[750] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 64

[751] Goodenough, *Justin,* 176; cf. Barnard, *Justin,* 102

[752] Goodenough, *Justin,* 176

[753] Hillar, "Numenius", 19

[754] B. G. Bucur, "The Angelic Spirit in Early Christianity: Justin, the Martyr and Philosopher", *The Journal of Religion* 88.2 (2008) 192

[755] Minns & Parvis render 1 Apol 33.9 as "that those who prophesy are inspired by nothing other than divine utterance you also will, I suppose, say", arguing that "if Justin had meant to say that prophets are inspired by the divine Logos he would not have used a dative of instrument" (175n5). However, the logic of the passage is that the Spirit is to be equated with the Logos (1 Apol 33.6) and therefore the prophets are inspired by the Logos. The translation "divine utterance" is not inappropriate as the Logos is *the* divine utterance.

the agency of both Spirit and Logos in inspiration.[756] He evidences further shared activities such as rebuking, mediating prayer and "adorning the mind".[757]

There are instances where Justin seems to identify the Spirit as the Logos. The most explicit of these passages is 1 Apol 33.6, where, speaking about Luke 1:31-2 Justin writes "Moses … signified that it is not proper to consider the Spirit and the Power which is from God, as anything other than the Logos who is also first-born of God". The reference to Moses is to the preceding discussion of Jacob's prophecy (Gen 49:10-11). There Justin deduces that the "blood of the vine" signifies that the coming lawgiver (= Christ) would have his blood from the power of God, not from human seed (1 Apol 32.11; cf. Dial 54). The logic of the passage requires Justin to believe that the power of God is the Logos, and so only the Logos can be the πνεῦμα that overshadowed the virgin. This is reasonable, since Justin identifies the Logos as the "first power" (1 Apol 32.10). Bucur, following Goodenough, understands Justin to mean that the Logos is *a* spirit rather than *the* Spirit. The deduction is that all powers are spirits [πνεύματα] (Dial 7.3; 30.2; 35.2; 76.7), and the Logos was power [δύναμις] (Dial 61.1; 2 Apol 6.3), therefore, the Logos may legitimately be referred to as a spirit [πνεῦμα].[758]

Briggman draws attention to a second passage that indicates the identification of Logos and Spirit.[759] This is a challenge of Trypho to Justin to explain how Christ can be a pre-existent God if at any point he lacked the powers of the Holy Spirit (Dial 87.1-2), referring to the seven spirits of Isa 11:1-2. Bucur connects this passage with Dial 85, where the Logos is identified as "Lord of powers"; in this case the "powers" are angels (Ps 148:1-2). Bucur sees this in the broader context of early Christian angelomorphic pneumatology; the seven powers can also be a singular power (cf. Dial 88.2).[760] In Dial 39 the spirits are listed differently, influenced by 1 Cor 12, but still number seven; here the bestowal of spiritual gifts is an activity of Christ ("he gave gifts to men"; Ps 68.19; cf. Eph 4:8).[761]Returning to Trypho's challenge, Justin's answer is that Christ never lacked the powers but they rested in him, i.e. prophecy ceased whilst Christ was on the earth and the spiritual gifts occurred to believers after his ascension. Similarly, the Spirit descended on Christ at his baptism, not because he needed it to descend but as a sign to those watching (Dial 88). This strongly implies some connection between the Spirit and the Logos, such that the former is a constant attendant of the latter.

Briggman proposes Spirit-Christology as a hermeneutic for these two passages (1 Apol 33.6; Dial 87-88): "Christ is the incarnation of the Spirit-Power-Word" and thus the Logos was the agent of the incarnation and never lacked the powers of the Spirit.[762] Bucur, also utilizing a Spirit-Christology, proposes a similar solution: "the Logos and the Spirit are, for Justin, the same reality, which presents itself in a complex and paradoxical relation of simultaneous unity and multiplicity, and with definite angelomorphic traits".[763] The inconvenience for these solutions is the paucity of those occasions where Justin appears to identify Logos and Spirit. On several occasions, Justin presents lists of

[756] A. Briggman, "Measuring Justin's Approach to the Spirit: Trinitarian Conviction and Binitarian Orientation", *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 121-2.
[757] Briggman, "Measuring Justin", 114-119
[758] Goodenough, *Justin,* 182; Bucur, "Angelic Spirit", 196
[759] Briggman, "Measuring Justin", 128ff
[760] Bucur, "Angelic Spirit", 199-207
[761] Briggman, "Measuring Justin", 129
[762] Briggman, "Measuring Justin", 132
[763] Bucur, "Angelic Spirit", 205.

names given to the Logos: Christ, King, Priest, God, Lord, Angel, Man, Captain, Stone, Son, Glory of the Lord, Wisdom (Dial 34; 59; 61) – but "Holy Spirit" is nowhere included amongst these names. Logos and Spirit are routinely distinguished, despite performing similar functions. Dial 36.6 implies that the Father and the Spirit are distinct and in some sense comparable (as persons).[764] Briggman also acknowledges a distinct role for the Spirit in "testifying to the deity and sovereignty of the Father and Son".[765]

A further suggestion worth considering is that the relation between the Logos and the Spirit is akin to that of Numenius' second and third gods; [766] Justin identifies the Spirit as the "third" from Ps-Plato's Second Letter (1 Apol 60). Such a view would imply that the Spirit is a lower aspect of the Logos that separates to perform a special function. The comparison is inexact and Justin is silent just where we would have him speak. Numenius' third god separates off to contemplate matter, leaving the second god to engage in self-contemplation. There is some indication that the Logos is noetic and demiurgic, and some indication that the Spirit is demiurgic (see below; cf. 1 Apol 60.6; cf. Gen 1:2), but Justin presents us with no systematic cosmogony. As to the origins of the Holy Spirit, we have only clues. Goodenough suggests that "there is no reason for trying to imagine for Justin a different sort of emanation of the Holy Spirit" than that of the Logos.[767] To fit the comparison with Numenius, the Spirit would need to proceed from (or separate from) the Logos. If the Holy Spirit is identified with the water of life,[768] then it can be said to proceed from the Rock that is Christ (Dial 114.4). Regarding the spiritual gifts, "from the grace of *his* Spirit's power, [Christ] imparts [gifts] to those who believe in him" (Dial 87.5 [my emphasis]). That the Spirit is often called "Spirit of God" need not necessarily indicate that it proceeds from the Father, although this would be a natural assumption. One might have expected Justin to explain his doctrine of the Holy Spirit more clearly in the *Dialogue* had it differed markedly from that of Hellenised Judaism, but I am uncertain how much store we can set by this. Though there is little extant of Numenius' views regarding the functions of the third god, it is probable that these did not include the inspiration of prophets or the bestowal of miraculous powers. At best we can say case not proven.

On the demiurgic function of the Spirit, Justin draws the parallel between the Spirit and Kore (= Persephone), reasoning that the demons prompted a corrupt imitation of the books of Moses in Greek mythology. His first parallel is between the cultic worship of Kore as springs of water and the Spirit of God borne upon the waters (Gen 1:2; 1 Apol 64.1-3). Justin appears to have another parallel in mind but we have a lacuna at 1 Apol 64.4.[769] Justin might be drawing attention to the myth of Kore fashioning a man out of mud (Pseudo-Hyginus, *Fabulae 220*; cf. Gen 2:7). Persephone was primarily known as the goddess of spring and of vegetation, dwelling as queen of the underworld for half the year (i.e. winter) and then emerging to create new crops and vegetation (i.e. spring). It is

[764] "And the Holy Spirit answered them, either in the name of the Father or in his own ..." (cf. Briggman, "Measuring Justin", 113)
[765] Briggman, "Measuring Justin", 113-4
[766] See R. M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelpia: Westminster Press, 1988) 61.
[767] Goodenough, *Justin*, 185
[768] J. E. Morgan-Wynne, "The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience in Justin Martyr", *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984) 173.
[769] Minns & Parvis, *Justin*, 251n3. It is possible, since the Spirit was sometimes regarded as feminine, that intended parallel was Kore as daughter of Zeus (contrast his reaction to the feminine first thought Athena; 1 Apol 64.5). If this were the case, it would give some indication of how Justin conceived the relationship of the Spirit to God.

possible, then, that Justin is making comparison with the demiurgic functions of the Spirit and Kore-Persephone. If Justin did ascribe the sustaining and renewal of nature to the Spirit, this may be how he differentiated the demiurgic functions of the Logos and the Spirit.

Whilst Justin is not explicit on the ontological status of the Spirit, there are reasons for thinking that he thought it lower than the Logos. Firstly, he believes the Spirit to be "in the third rank [τάξει]" (1 Apol 13.3) and to have been given the third place [χώραν] by Plato (1 Apol 60.7). Whilst τάξει and χώραν do not necessitate ontological levels, this seems to be the implication with regard to God (= first) and the Logos (= second). Secondly, if Justin does differentiate demiurgic functions for the Logos and the Spirit, the latter's role seems to be the immanent role of sustenance and renewal. The greater immanence of the Spirit in comparison with the Logos would be indicative of an ontological hierarchy. Thirdly, we find indications of this ontological hierarchy in Justin's closest followers, namely Tatian and Athenagoras.

Triads in Justin

The triad of Father-Son-Spirit occurs several times in Justin's writings, though primarily in liturgical contexts.[770] One such context is baptism (1 Apol 61.3; see above). Another context is the Eucharist (1 Apol 65.3; 67.2), where Son and Spirit are mediators of prayer and worship; this has precedent in the NT (cf. John 15:16; Eph 5:20; 6:18), although they are never paired in this way.[771] The connection with baptism (1 Apol 65.1) may suggest that the Eucharistic prayer is an extension of the baptismal formula – after all, it is only those who had made such a confession in baptism who would partake of the bread and wine. It is significant that Justin clearly subordinates the Son and the Spirit to the Father as the ultimate recipient of glory.

A third context is a general comment about Christian worship. Justin writes that Christians reject the "supposed gods" of paganism but acknowledge the "most true" God (1 Apol 6.1). He continues, "this God we do venerate and worship, and also the Son who came from him and taught us these things, and the company of the other good angels who follow him and are like him, and also the prophetic Spirit" (1 Apol 6.2). The inclusion of the angels between the Son and the Spirit is problematic. Firstly, it implies that the angels are venerated and worshipped; applying σεβόμεθα to the Son is a departure from NT precedent,[772] but the worship of angels was condemned by contemporary Christians (cf. Aristides). Secondly, this passage would seem to imply that Jesus is also an angel. Several readings have been proposed: (1) that the angels were worshipped before the Spirit (Goodenough); (2) that the angels are Christ's "bodyguards", mentioned in a parenthesis (Swete); (3) that angels were the third member of a primitive triad (Kretschmar); (4) that the Spirit is to be numbered amongst the angels (Benoit); (5) that the host of angels is something Christ taught about (Schaff); (6) that Christ is the commander-in-chief of the angels (Cf. Dial 34.2; 61.1; 62.5).[773] Though the Son is called "Angel" (Dial 61.1; 127.4), it seems preferable to read ἄλλων pleonastically as separating the angels from the Son.[774] I would suggest that the angels

[770] Cf. Grant, *Doctrine of God*, 81
[771] Briggman, "Measuring Justin", 116
[772] See particularly J. D. G. Dunn, *Did the first Christians worship Jesus?* (London: SPCK, 2010) 16-7.
[773] Bucur, "Angelic Spirit", 198-9
[774] T. B. Falls, *Saint Justin Martyr* (Catholic University Press of America, 1977) 39n; Minns & Parvis, *Justin*, 93n2;

are those, like human believers, who are being taught by Christ, hence they are described as following and becoming like him (as opposed to those angels and men who follow the serpent; cf. Dial 45.4; 100.6). Therefore, the liturgical triad (God-Son-Spirit) is interwoven with Justin's description of having received teaching (from Christ) that he is passing on to others (cf. Dial 58.1). It may be that this triad, like the baptismal formula, is a summary of the instruction Justin has received. Thus far, Justin's triadic language shows clear dependence on Matt 28:19 and "reflects an established liturgical use".[775]

A further triad in 1 Apol 13 is not free from liturgy, but here it is the Creator (= God) who is venerated [σεβόμενοι] and Christ who is honoured [τιμῶμεν], whilst no worship-word is applied to the Spirit. And again, we find the occurrence of creedal-style descriptions ("who was crucified under Pontius Pilate"; 1 Apol 13.3). Here, as in 1 Apol 6, Justin is describing the beliefs of Christians according to the threefold confession he has received. However, Justin is also doing something radically different by enumerating Father, Son and Spirit and ascribing to them rank, saying "we hold him in second place, with the prophetic Spirit in the third rank" [τάξει]. Justin is not a Trinitarian – "such words are entirely incompatible with the doctrine of the Trinity"[776] – but he posits a hierarchical divine triad. The members of this triad he knows from Christian liturgy, but enumerating them and ranking them is new. Justin himself makes the comparison with Plato.

Justin is attempting to demonstrate that Plato took his doctrines from Moses (1 Apol 59.1). He supposes that Plato took the concept of the X-shape in *Timaeus* from *Numbers*. As part of his exposition, he starts to enumerate the powers: "he said the power after the first God was 'arranged as an X in the whole'" (1 Apol 60.5). According to Justin, by equating the World Soul with the image of the cross, Plato has given rank to the Logos: "he gives the second place to the Logos from God" (1 Apol 60.7). Further, he says that having read that "the Spirit of God was borne upon the waters" (cf. Gen 1:2), Plato "gives the third [place] to the Spirit, which was said to be borne on the water, saying: 'But the third parts around the third'" (1 Apol 60.6-7; cf. *Second Epistle* 312e). No objective reading would suggest that Genesis and the Second Epistle were connected, let alone one dependent on the other. So let us attempt to reconstruct Justin's logic. Justin believes Plato took his account of creation from formless matter from Genesis (cf. 1 Apol 59.3). Plato includes the "coming god" in the *Timaeus*, but does not seem to mention the Spirit. Yet Justin knows from Plato's Second Epistle that he had an ontological hierarchy, with a second and a third under the King. Surely, he reasons, Plato must have got such an important idea from Moses – the second must be the Logos ("the first power after God") and, following the baptismal formula, the third must be the Spirit.

The fact that the Second Epistle is purposively enigmatic no doubt aided Justin in making these equations. He may also have been aided by Numenius, who interprets the Second Epistle as referring to three gods; Grant argues "it is hard to believe that he [Justin] would have encountered the passage had his attention not been drawn to it by a Platonist", and he believes this Platonist was Numenius.[777] It is possible that there is a

[775]Hill, *Three-Personed God*, 30
[776]Goodenough, *Justin*, 186
[777]Grant, *Doctrine of God*, 87. Grant notes that those who cite the Second Epistle are also those who cite Numenius, specifically Clement (Str. 5.103.1), Origen (Contra Celsum 6.18) and Eusebius (PE II.20.1-3). However, whilst believing Justin was prompted by the works of Numenius to cite the Second Epistle,

silent stage in Justin's arguments about Plato; that what he read in the works of a contemporary Platonist (i.e. Numenius) could be ascribed to Plato. After all, Justin would have found more satisfying comparisons to Moses in Numenius. But it is no advantage for Justin to cite Numenius, since his argument is that Plato took his best ideas from Moses. Unfortunately for Justin, Plato does not say explicitly what Numenius does, which may explain why he relies on such weak comparisons to establish the dependence of Plato on Moses. In effect, Numenius posited three gods, therefore Plato posited three gods and took this belief from Moses; consequently, Moses must have taught a divine triad.

In summary, Justin does posit an ontological triad of God-Son-Spirit; not a trinity, but a triadic hierarchy (1 Apol 13.3; 60.7). Barnard concludes that "Justin had no real doctrine of the Trinity"; since the functions of the Spirit were performed by the Logos, whilst the Spirit had no role in the triad but was included by tradition.[778] Briggman goes further, concluding that Justin's thought has a binitarian orientation (i.e. Spirit-Christology) that is in tension with his Trinitarian convictions, "to the detriment of the Holy Spirit who remains partially eclipsed by the Word".[779] Though I recognise some connection between the Logos and the Spirit, I do not think Justin intends them to be identified. Yet such identification would simplify his scheme, so the question remains: why did he continue to distinguish them? Part of the reason, as Barnard and Briggman conclude, must be the threefold baptismal liturgy that he has received. However, the threefold liturgy does not give license for ontological conclusions, and if one were to venture such conclusions, there are other ontological configurations one could choose. Why didn't Justin configure the Logos and the Spirit as the two "hands" of God (cf. Philo)? Alternatively, since the Logos and the Spirit are, like angels, a δύναμις of God, why didn't Justin configure a multiplicity of powers, perhaps as varying permutations of a unified Power?[780] Why a triadic hierarchy? The only precedent for an enumerated triad is Plato, or rather, Plato read through the Neopythagorean tradition. Justin, convinced that Plato took his best ideas from Moses, can accept this ontology without accepting all the trappings.

c. Tatian the Assyrian[781]

Tatian describes himself an Assyrian born to pagan parents (c.120?). He received training in rhetoric (HE IV.16.7) and throughout his extant work manifests an interest in grammar. During his travels, Tatian sampled various religious and philosophical teachings, and says he was initiated into the mysteries. At some point he was converted to Christianity, perhaps on coming to Rome and perhaps through the instruction of Justin (HE IV.29.1). He ascribes his conversion to reading "some barbarian writings" (i.e. OT) and was persuaded by "the lack of arrogance in the wording, the artlessness of the speakers, the easily intelligible account of the creation of the world, the foreknowledge of the future, the remarkable quality of the precepts and the doctrine of a single ruler of the universe" (Or 29.1-2). Like his master Justin, Tatian taught, and one of his pupils,

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Grant argues that Justin "did not develop any of the Numenian implications in the direction of the doctrine of the Trinity" (88).

[778] Barnard, *Justin*, 105-6

[779] Briggman, "Measuring Justin", 136

[780] See "I conclude that the Logos and the Spirit are, for Justin, the same reality, which presents itself in a complex and paradoxical relation of simultaneous unity and multiplicity, and with definite angelomorphic traits" (Bucur, "Angelic Spirit", 205)

[781] For Greek text and English translation of the *Oration to the Greeks* and fragments see M. Whittaker, *Tatian: Oratio ad Gracecos and fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

Rhodo, is known to us by name (HE V.13.1,8). According to Irenaeus, after the death of Justin (c.165), Tatian began to introduce new doctrines and separated from the Church. Eusebius dates his breaking away to 172 (Chron. 12). According to Epiphanius, he returned to the East and founded his own school (Pan. 1.3.46).[782] Since Lightfoot, it has been proposed that Tatian was the Assyrian teacher of Clement (Strom 1.1.11.2),[783] although "Assyrian" alone does not seem sufficient to justify identification, and Clement's thought seems to be little influenced.[784] Though Tatian was regarded as heretical by the Western fathers (based largely on the testimony of Irenaeus), he had an enduring influence on the Syrian church, witnessed by its ascetic tendencies and the concept of the mortality of the soul,[785] as well as the unmitigated praise of the early Eastern fathers.[786] Petersen accounts for this difference in reception by the difference in attitudes of East and West; in the West the primary issue was authority; in the East, it was Christology and Tatian was "within the bounds of orthodoxy" on this point.[787] This analysis may be too simplistic, but it may be that Tatian's teaching, whilst not in itself widely divergent from Justin's, took him too close to the Gnostics.

One of Tatian's works is extant: the *Oration to the Greeks.* This work was regarded as useful by Clement, Origen and Eusebius, primarily because of the detailed chronological argument in favour of the priority of Moses (Strom I.21; HE IV.29);[788] it is presumably for this reason that the work of this "heretic" has been preserved.[789] He also produced a gospel harmony called the *Diatessaron.* Though it is no longer extant, "more than 170 specific MSS or works are known to contain Diatessaron reading and sequences of harmonization".[790] The enduring influence of this work is an indication of its popularity. The other works known to us by name, though no longer extant, are *On Animals, On Problems, On Perfection According to the Saviour*[791]and *To Those Who Have Propounded Ideas about God.*[792]

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[782] Whittaker, *Tatian,* ix; E. J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The Case of Tatian* (London: Routledge, 2003) 1-2;

[783] For example, J. H. Hill, *The Earliest Life of Christ ever compiled from the Four Gospels* (1910; repr. Gorgias Press, 2001) viii; D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (University of California Press, 1992) 291n45.

[784] "There is little connexion between the thought of the two men, and Clement shows no acquaintance with the Diatessaron. The suggestion must remain a conjecture, one which I view sceptically" (W. L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 43n26).

[785] Whittaker, *Tatian,* x

[786] See Hunt, *Tatian,* 144-175.

[787] W. L. Petersen, "Tatian the Assyrian" in A Companion to Second-Century 'Heretics' (eds. A. Marjenen & P. Louman; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 155.

[788] Whittaker, *Tatian,* x

[789] Hunt, *Tatian,* 2

[790] W. L. Petersen, "The Diatessaron of Tatian", in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (eds. B. D. Ehrman & M. W. Holmes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 77.

[791] Harris claimed to have found the text of Tatian's *On Perfection According to the Saviour* preserved within a treatise of Ephrem. The text stresses that asceticism is necessary for the follower of Jesus. There does not seem to be strong evidence to link this excerpt to Tatian, and even if some connection were demonstrated there is no knowing, without some comparator text, what is Tatian's and what is Ephrem's. If the text were Tatian's it would be significant as, unlike the *Oration,* it mentions the life of Jesus. (J. R. Harris, "Tatian: perfection according to the Saviour", *BJRL* 8:1 (1924), 15-51.

[792] Whittaker, *Tatian,* x; Hunt, *Tatian,* 2

The *Oration* is preserved in four manuscripts, which all seem to be based on the copy in the *Codex Parisinus* 451, now lost.[793] The work is seen by Grant as a response to the Gallican martyrdoms and dated to c.177, based primarily on the reference to the stipends of 400 aurei for the philosophical professorships at Athens which started in that year.[794] (Tatian gives the figure as 600 aurei – Grant says that was exaggerated "due to envy"). Barnard responded that imperial patronage of philosophers occurred throughout the second century, so it is not possible to date the *Oration* on this basis.[795] Hunt supposes that the work could be dated on Irenaeus' testimony; if the work is orthodox, it predates 165; if heretical, then it is later.[796] However, it is by no means clear that Irenaeus is correct in dating Tatian's "heresy" from 165 (see below). Barnard proposes that, whilst Tatian mentions the death-plot of Crescens against Justin and himself, he does not refer to the martyrdom of Justin, which we might expect him to do if it had occurred. Barnard concludes that Justin was still alive when the *Oration* was written and so tentatively dates it to c.160.[797] A further consideration that has bearing on the date is the genre and purpose of the *Oration.* Grant classified it, at least in part, as a *logos syntaktikos* or "farewell discourse" to Greco-Roman culture; Tatian , reversing the standard form, criticises the very things that the orator would usually praise.[798] If this is the case, then it might be dated to c.172 when Tatian leaves for the East to set up his own school. McGehee has classified it as a *protrepticus*, "given with the intent of attracting people to study the 'barbarian philosophy' with Tatian".[799] This would seem to fit Tatian's conclusion: "I offer myself to you, prepared for my doctrines to be examined" (Or 42.1), which would seem to indicate that he is soliciting discourse rather than departing the West forever. This might indicate a date earlier in Tatian's career, perhaps whilst he is still teaching in Rome.

Influence of Philosophy

Tatian was primarily concerned with grammar, not philosophy.[800] Presumably, "the budding sophist would also study philosophy, if only to show himself abreast of general knowledge of the subject",[801] but he does not show any particular philosophical bent. Any parallels with contemporary Platonism are best understood as the influence of Justin rather than direct engagement. Whilst he considers himself to be "a philosopher" (Or 42.1), for Tatian this meant an adherent to the Christian philosophy. In contrast to his master, Tatian never quotes Plato or other pagans favourably, but is antagonistic towards the philosophers, the grammarians and Greco-Roman culture in general. This does not mean that Tatian was ignorant of pagan writers; his attack on the grammarians parallel those made by Sextus Empiricus, and the scandalous stories about philosophers are repeated from Tatian's contemporaries.[802] Grant suggests that Tatian may have known Celsus' *True Discourse,* because he writes "you say that we talk rubbish at meetings of women" (Or 33).[803]

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[793] Whittaker, *Tatian,* xxi
[794] Grant, *Greek Apologists,* 112-4; see R. M. Grant, "The Date of Tatian's Oration", *HTR* 46 (1953).
[795] L. W. Barnard, "The Heresy of Tatian – Once Again", *JEH* 19.1 (1968) 1.
[796] Hunt, *Tatian,* 3
[797] Barnard, "Heresy of Tatian", 2-3; Hunt, *Tatian,* 3
[798] Grant, *Greek Apologists,* 115-6
[799] M. McGehee, "Why Tatian Never 'Apologized' to the Greeks", *JECS* 1 (1993) 143.
[800] Grant, *Greek Apologists,* 118
[801] Whittaker, *Tatian,* xiii
[802] Grant, *Greek Apologists,* 117-120
[803] Grant, *Greek Apologists,* 114

Influence of Gnosticism

At least since Irenaeus, Tatian has been associated with Valentinism. Modern scholarly opinion has diverged on this topic, some suggesting that he adopted some form of Gnosticism, others that he was essentially orthodox. If Tatian was influenced by Valentinism, does that influence manifest itself in his extant work? And was Tatian so influenced whilst his teacher, Justin, was still alive?

A couple of things make the influence of Valentinus (or Marcion) on Tatian unlikely. The first is that his pupil Rhodon wrote against Marcion; this would be odd if Tatian held that the demiurge was evil.[804] Rhodon promised a treatise giving explanations of Tatian's *On Problems* (fr.4 = HE 5.13.8); it is not obvious whether Rhodon's explanations were intended in defence or rebuttal, but had their views been radically different, one might expect Eusebius to more explicit. The second is Tatian's attitude to Paul. Eusebius associates Tatian with another man named Severus who rejected the Pauline Epistles and Acts (HE 4.29).[805] Similarly, Jerome reports that Tatian repudiated a number of Paul's epistles but accepted *Titus* (fr.10). This is in contrast to Marcion and Valentinus, who place great emphasis on the Pauline epistles.

Tatian is most commonly associated with the Encratites. Eusebius presents Tatian as the founder of this heresy, but Irenaeus, on whose testimony he depends, only says that he introduced the denial of Adam's salvation (AH I.28.1). Irenaeus claims that Encratites sprung from Saturninus and Marcion ,but given his objective - to connect all heresies to Simon - this statement may indicate no more than that Irenaeus detected some overlap in their practices (i.e. the rejection of marriage). Similarly, Tatian may be connected to the Encratites in the mind of Irenaeus for no other reason than their shared denial of Adam's salvation. Claims that Tatian was against eating meat or drinking wine (cf. Jerome), are probably based on descriptions of the Encratites (Clement, *Paed.* 2.2.33.1).[806] Attempts have been made to find traces of asceticism in the Diatessaron, but it is almost impossible to be sure whether the witness reflects the Diatessaron or not.[807] Petersen describes Tatian's attitude in *Oration* as "prudish" and thus "entirely compatible" with Encratitism.[808]

Tatian is associated by Irenaeus with Valentinus, Marcion and Saturninus by comparison of doctrine, but he does not claim explicitly that he knew their works, discoursed with their followers or joined their sects. The claims of Irenaeus, upon which later testimonies about Tatian are based, are that he (1) declared marriage to be corruption, (2) denied Adam's salvation, and (3) had a system of invisible aeons.

Barnard claims that marriage is equated with adultery and pederasty in the *Oration* (8.2);[809] however, Tatian is only deriding pagan mythology by listing the actions of the gods that are incompatible with the divine nature. Clement preserves a fragment from *On Perfection According to the Saviour* (fr.5 = Strom 3.12), apparently discussing 1 Cor 7:5-6, which Clement takes to imply that Tatian forbade marriage; however, he may be

[804] Barnard, "Heresy of Tatian", 3
[805] Barnard, "Heresy of Tatian", 10
[806] Petersen, "Tatian the Assyrian", 142.
[807] Petersen, "Tatian the Assyrian", 145
[808] Petersen, "Tatian the Assyrian", 144
[809] Barnard, "Heresy of Tatian", 4-5

only urging temporary abstinence to build self-control. Alternatively, like Aphrahat[810], he may have taught complete continence within marriage, whilst not rejecting marriage; it is possible that Clement and Irenaeus did not make the distinction. Whatever the case, asceticism was not uncommon amongst Christians or non-Christians of the second century and does not make one a Gnostic.[811]

Petersen connects the non-salvation of Adam with Gnostic speculation regarding Adam-figures.[812] Yet the story of Adam, inasmuch as it is a vehicle for discussing free-will, temptation and grace, will be a common stock to a wide spectrum of Judeo-Christian theologies. Irenaeus seems to regard it as heretical to deny salvation to Adam, but the Bible makes no explicit statement on Adam's fate. In the *Oration,* Tatian asserts that salvation is predicated on uniting the soul with the divine spirit, and that the divine spirit was originally the soul's companion, but departed due to the disobedience of men (Or 13.2f). On this logic Adam, having disobeyed and lost the divine spirit, would forfeit salvation.[813] However, Tatian also writes of repentance, "it is possible for everyone defeated to win another time" (Or 15.4). It is possible that Tatian later came to change his views on post-conversion sins. In any case, this would not make Tatian a Gnostic.

The final charge, that he posited a system of invisible aeons, seems difficult to substantiate from our available sources. The *Oration* does contain reference to αἰῶνες οι ἀκρείττονες ("better worlds" [Whittaker]; Or 20.2), but the context seems to be a comparison of this world with the celestial worlds, where the soul is clothed with immortality. Barnard writes, "it is noticeable that Tatian nowhere mentions the syzygies, the procession of pairs from the pleroma ... his mention of the 'aeons' is consonant with Valentinus' teaching in the *Gospel of Truth,* if that be his, rather than with the later Valentinian teaching".[814] Yet even this assessment goes beyond what is written, because Tatian describes the αἰῶνες in topological and not personal terms. In one fragment, it is reported that Tatian posited a power of hair that provided Samson with his strength and punished women who adorned their hair for the purpose of committing sexual immorality (fr.7). If Tatian did posit distinct powers in charge of things like hair, then it is possible that Irenaeus considered these to be equivalent to the Valentinian aeons, but for Justin, "powers" were angels (cf. 1 Cor 11:10). Ascribing a specific remit to an angel is perhaps unusual, but does not make one a Gnostic.

The other charge laid against Tatian by several witnesses is that he ascribed creation to another god. Origen reports that Tatian read the words "let there be light" (Gen 1:3) as optative, rather than imperative, as if the creator god was praying to a superior God (fr.8 = *de orat* 24; cf. fr.7). This gives the impression that the creator god is not an evil demiurge but a pious servant requesting assistance from a superior. The *Oration* does criticize Zeno for portraying God as the creator of evil,[815] but here evil seems to mean specific "unmentionable" actions rather than general imperfection (Or 3.2). If Tatian ascribed creation to the Logos (see below) this would explain the logic of his interpretation of *Genesis*. In a further fragment, Clement reports that Tatian "abolished the Law as if belonging to another God" (fr.6 = Strom 3.12). It is possible that Tatian

[810] Hunt, *Tatian,* 154
[811] Petersen, "Tatian the Assyrian", 139f
[812] Petersen, "Tatian the Assyrian", 146
[813] Barnard, "Heresy of Tatian", 4-5
[814] Barnard, "Heresy of Tatian", 4
[815] Petersen, "Tatian the Assyrian", 148

ascribed the lawgiving to the Logos, saying he used to "prevent wickedness by prohibitions" (7.2). This might parallel Ptolemy's comments in the *Letter to Flora,* where he ascribes the Law to the demiurge, who is the "image of the better god". It is interesting that Epiphanius, defending the salvation of Adam, argues that it was because Adam was created by God, and not an intermediary, that he can be saved.[816] It seems possible, then, that Tatian may have ascribed creation and the lawgiving to an intermediary (the Logos). This could have been a reasonable extension of Justin's theology, but it also puts him close to Ptolemy.

There do seem to be several convergences of terminology in *Oration* and *Letter to Flora.*[817]Both repeatedly use the phrase "perfect god" (Or 4.2; 12.4; 15.2; 17.4; cf. 33.3.4; 33.7.3,5,6), and both describe God as incorruption (Or 7.1; 33.7.6). Tatian described demons as material (Or 12.4); Ptolemy applies a similar description to the devil (33.7.7). Grant also notes some parallels with Theodotus, including the reference to the Spirit as "Minister of God" and the demons as "robbers".[818] However, if the *Oration* shares some language with the followers of Valentinus, it is miles apart from the mythology ascribed to Ptolemy by Irenaeus; Tatian knows nothing (or says nothing) of the pleroma, the ogdoad, decad or duodecad; the fall of Sophia, or the demiurge produced by Achamoth. We might account for the similarity of language in a number of ways. Hunt accounts for the parallels as part "coincidence" and part shared philosophical background.[819] Grant, withdrawing from his early position of direct influence, suggests Tatian was simply "unguarded" in his use of similar language.[820] Barnard concludes, "his *Oratio* shows how a brilliant, although not a profound mind could take over a few ideas from Valentinus ... while not seriously adopting the tenets of Gnosticism".[821] Petersen concludes that the *Oration* has "Gnostic tendencies", and supports Irenaeus' report that Tatian developed a system of invisible aeons.[822] Two other options might be that the *Oration* comes from the early stages of Tatian's "descent" into Gnosticism, or that Tatian was only familiar with the "public" forms of Valentianism (as expressed in the *Letter to Flora*) and was not initiated into the secret mythology known to Irenaeus. This last option seems to me to be the most likely.

Tatian on God

Like Justin, Tatian identifies God as Being (15.2). Though he does not use the term "uncreated", he says as much: "our God has no origins in time, since he alone is without beginning and himself is the beginning of all things" (4.2). God is invisible, impalpable and ineffable (4.2-3); "he is not visible to human eyes nor in any way to be comprehended" (4.1). Yet Tatian says God can be known and comprehended through the things he has made (4.2; cf. Rom 1:20).

Like Justin, Tatian makes a sharp distinction between God and matter, but Tatian is explicit regarding the temporality of matter. "For matter is not without beginning like God nor, because of having beginning, is it also of equal power with God" (5.3). Here Tatian challenges the Platonic notion of matter as a first principle. God stands apart from

[816] Petersen, "Tatian the Assyrian", 150
[817] See particularly, R. M. Grant, "The Heresy of Tatian", *JTS* 5 (1954).
[818] Grant, *Greek Apologists,* 129; Petersen, "Tatian the Assyrian", 149;
[819] Hunt, *Tatian,* 25,24
[820] Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 131
[821] Barnard, "Heresy of Tatian", 8
[822] Petersen, "Tatian the Assyrian", 152

matter; "the perfect God is fleshless" (15.2). "'God is a spirit', not pervading matter, but the constructor of material spirits and the shapes [σχημάτων] that are in matter" (4.2; cf. John 4:24). Stipulating that God does pervade matter may be a conscious rebuttal of the Stoic conception of God, but also seems to imply the existence of a lower spirit(s) that does pervade matter. The whole created world derives from matter, and matter is produced by God in two phases. Firstly, matter is produced by God "raw and formless"; secondly, matter is divided and organised (12.1-2).

Tatian says that prior to his conversion, he was impressed by the OT doctrine of the monarchy of God (29.2), and this concept of a single first principle seems to infuse his thought (cf. Rhodo; HE 5.13). Following NT precedent, Tatian asserts that "only God is to be feared" [φοβητέον] (4.1) and refuses to worship [προσκυνεῖν] created things (4.2).

Tatian on the Logos

"God 'was in the beginning', and we have received the tradition that the beginning was the power of the Word" (5.1; cf. John 1:1-2; cf. Gen 1:2). This interpretation identifying the "beginning" as the Son appears in Justin (Dial 61), and is adopted by Ptolemy in his interpretation of John 1 (cf. Aristo).[823] Tatian takes the identification of the Word as Beginning (ἀρχή) to mean that Word is a cause of the universe. He writes, "the Word begotten in the beginning in turn begot our creation by fabricating [δημιουργήσας] matter for himself" (5.3); the Logos also created [δημιουργὸς] humans and angels (7.1). This description of the Logos fabricating matter would imply that the Logos should be identified with the "sole creator" [μόνου ... δημιουργοῦ], who projects [προβεβλημένη] matter and brings it into being (5.3). Yet such identification stands at odds with his latter statement that matter is produced [προβεβλημένην] by God (12.1). The reconciliation of these ideas is that God "established all things though the power of the Word" (5.1); that is, the creative action of the Logos can be ascribed as the (indirect) action of God. Since God does not pervade matter, the action of an intermediary is necessary for the ordering of matter. This is akin to the Platonic descriptions of creation as the ordering of pre-existent matter, although for Tatian, matter is not eternal.[824]

There are hints of a two stage creation. God, whilst alone, is "in relation" to the potential creation, "which had not yet come into being" (5.1). This potential creation was established by the "power of the Word" (or rational power). Then the Logos was begotten, and in turn begot matter (5.3). He then orders matter (12.1) with the "shapes" from God (4.2). If this reconstruction is correct, then God forms the paradigm (Forms?) of the world by his rational power, then begets the demiurge to create and order matter according to that paradigm.

The Logos is described as springing forth from God (5.1) and being begotten by him (5.3). Tatian uses two analogies from Justin to describe this process – a lamp lit from another; spoken words – both being designed to show that in begetting the Logos, God is not diminished, and presumably retains his rational power (5.2). Like Justin, Tatian seems ambiguous on whether the Logos is created. The Logos is described as the "firstborn work" of God and the "beginning of the universe" (5.1). This would imply that the Logos has a beginning and, by the same logic applied to matter, is not of equal power to God (5.3).

[823] For Ptolemy the Beginning (= Son) is a different entity from the Word.
[824] Hunt, *Tatian*, 107

As in Justin, the Logos takes on the function of prophetic inspiration, and seemingly law-giving. Further, it seems to be the Logos that expelled the devil and withdrew immortality from Adam (7.1-2). Though Tatian does not discuss these, it is reasonable to suppose that he, like Justin, ascribed the OT theophanies to the Logos. Also, like Justin, there seems to be some ambiguity as to whether the Logos is one and the same as the Spirit (see below).

Tatian barely mentions Jesus in the *Oration,* and never by name. He briefly refers to the incarnation, saying "we are not fools, men of Greece, nor are we talking nonsense when we declare that God has been born in the form [μορφῇ] of man" (21.1; cf. Phil 2:7). He elsewhere refers to "the suffering God" (13.3). The fact that he says "God" and not "the Logos" is significant, because it may be presumed that he, like Christians before him, thought it was the Logos that became flesh. Since God (the Father) does not pervade matter but is fleshless, it seems safe to conclude that by "God", Tatian means the Logos. It is possible that he equated the incarnation of the Logos with a manifestation of God, but following Justin, he probably saw no difficulty in naming the Logos as (a second) God.

Tatian on the Spirit

Tatian says "we have knowledge of two different kinds of spirits" (12.1): here, he can only be talking about the spirits within man, because he appears to speak of many other spirits. One kind of spirit is called "soul"; the other, greater kind is "the image of God". (This is perhaps cognate with the Platonist concept of a bipartite soul, particularly Plutarch's concept of a rational soul "floating" within the body).[825] The latter spirit preserved the soul (13.1) and gave the first man immortality (7.3). This spirit was originally the companion of the soul, but the soul was disobedient, so the spirit departed (7.2; cf. 20.1). A "spark" of the spirit remained, which prompts the soul to search for God, but in ignorance humans followed demons and adopted polytheism (13.2-3). Tatian exhorts his listeners to "search for what we once had and have lost, and link the soul to the Holy Spirit and busy ourselves with the union ordained by God" (15.1). And later he says, "if such a structure [i.e. the soul] is like a shrine, God is willing to dwell in it through the spirit, his representative" (15.2). This is how humans can regain immortality; "if it [i.e. the soul] gains union with the divine spirit, it is not unaided, but mounts to the realms above where the spirit leads it" (13.2). According to this scheme, the Holy Spirit is the representative of God within the souls of righteous people. This implies that the Spirit is not God, but the means by which God is immanent within humanity and the world. This Spirit also has prophetic function, revealing to some souls "predictions" that manifest to other souls "what had been hidden" (13.3). Tatian's concept of a "spark" of the spirit seems analogous to Justin's seed of the Logos. It is intriguing that it is connected by Tatian to the Spirit rather than the Logos.

Tatian describes what he calls the "material spirit", which all parts of the world share, in (12.3). He says, "there exists therefore spirit in luminaries, spirit in angels, spirit in plants and waters, spirit in men, and spirit in animals; though it is one and the same it possesses differences within itself" (12.4-5). This "material spirit", which permeates matter and gives differentiation to it, seems to be akin to the Stoic World Soul. Perhaps this "material spirit" is to be identified with the "spirit that pervades matter" (4.2). Hunt sees

[825] Hunt, *Tatian*, 107

the material spirit as something inherent to matter, but rejects any comparison with Plutarch's irrational world soul.[826] However, the concept of a bipartite world soul maps onto the two spirits, the material spirit and the Holy Spirit. For Plutarch, the irrational world soul provides motion and disorder; it is the Nous that brings order. Whilst Tatian's material spirit seems to provide some sense of differentiation, it is also the source of disease (16.3) and the nature of demons (12.3). Yet if the Holy Spirit maps on to Plutarch's rational world soul (= nous), then seemingly so does the Logos.

There seems to be some ambiguity regarding the Logos and the Holy Spirit. Tatian uses John 1:5 to describe the relationship between the human soul and the spirit; the soul is darkness and did not comprehend the light, which is the Logos (13.1-2). This would seem to imply that the Spirit is the Logos or, as Grant suggests, that the Spirit proceeds from the Logos.[827] Also, if Tatian identified the spark of the spirit with Justin's seed of the Logos, and if he ascribed the function of the rational world soul to both Logos and Spirit, then weight is lent to the idea that both he (and his teacher) connect Logos and Spirit, with the latter as the lower, immanent, aspect. Nevertheless, although Tatian is far from lucid on this point, elsewhere he seems to maintain a distinction between the Logos and the Spirit.

Tatian on Triads

There are no triadic formulae in Tatian's *Oration.* He knows of God, the Logos and the Spirit, but it is not obvious that he has distinguished separate functions for them. However, the variety of ways in which he uses the word "spirit" makes his ontology somewhat ambiguous. God is transcendent and unique as first principle and monarch; the Logos seems to be God's rationality that then emanates from him as creator and arranger, and the Spirit is the divine presence within the human soul. It is possible that Tatian identified the latter two, or regarded the Spirit as the lower aspect of the Logos. If this is correct, then we have a descending hierarchical ontology; as Grant writes, "there is a kind of chain of being, not a Trinity".[828]

d. Athenagoras of Athens[829]

Little enough is known about Athenagoras. He is identified as the author of *Legatio* by *Codex Paris 451* and by Methodius (*De Res* 1.36.37).[830] Boethus dedicated his treatise *Difficult Expressions in Plato* to one Athenagoras, but this would add little even were the identification certain.[831] The other extant testimony, from Philip of Side, is generally considered to be unreliable.[832] From the title of *Legatio,* we may conclude that

[826] Hunt, *Tatian,* 106
[827] Grant, *Doctrine of God*, 82
[828] Grant, *Doctrine of God*, 82
[829] For Greek text and English translation see W. R. Schoedel, *Athenagoras;* Legatio *and* De Resurrectione (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).
[830] Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* ix; Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 13.
[831] Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 16
[832] Philip says Athenagoras was a pagan philosopher, converted by reading the scripture, and then became the first director of the School of Alexandria and the teacher of Clement. The link between Justin and Clement through Athenagoras would be highly significant but this testimony is inconsistent with Clement's own claims about his tutition. It is, at least, possible that Philip of Side, as a member of the School of Alexandria, had access to records no longer extant. For discussion see Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 5-6; Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 15. A number of scholars have hypothesized some connection between Athenagoras and Alexandria. See Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 9-10. Rankin refers to the article by Runia, which identifies *verba philonica* within *De Resurrectione.* Runia argues that, given that Athenagoras is associated with Athens and given that Philo would not have been known outside Alexandria at this time, it is more

Athenagoras was born in Athens and was likely to have been a philosopher prior to his conversion.[833] The ascription of *De Resurrectione* to Athenagoras by *Codex Paris 451* is doubted by many; therefore, I will consider only the *Legatio.*[834]

There is broad consensus in dating *Legatio* to c.177.[835] A number of scholars think that the *Legatio* was originally delivered before the emperor in person.[836] If this is the case, then it was likely delivered before Aug 178 (the expedition to Germany);[837] the visit of Marcus and Commodus to Athens in summer 176 for initiation in the mysteries may have provided the opportunity.[838] This dating would make Athenagoras contemporary with Atticus.

Athenagoras does not mention or engage with Marcion or any form of Gnosticism; "when one reads the Legatio ... one might never know that there was such a thing as Christian heresy".[839]

Athenagoras is often considered intellectually superior to Justin,[840] and yet Athenagoras' own impact on the development of Christianity seems to have been minimal.[841] He is almost unknown, apart from the testimonies mentioned above. He is representative of how an interesting and original thinker continued the philosophical exercise started by Justin.

Influence of Philosohy

Athenagoras considers himself to be a philosopher addressing "philosopher kings" (11.3). His methodology is to repudiate the charge of atheism by appeal to the major philosophical schools (as well as the poets) to demonstrate that they also criticised the traditional gods and posited a single uncreated God. By his own admission, he uses doxographies in constructing his argument, though many scholars believe he knew some of the Platonic works directly.[842] Rankin believes that the *Legatio* demonstrates "clear acquaintance" with Alcinous' *Didaskalikos.*[843]

Whilst Athenagoras refers to several philosophical schools, and arguably places some special emphasis on Stoic thought and language,[844] it seems his primary engagement is

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likely that *De Resurrectione* is inauthentic and comes from a later period. (D. T. Runia, "Verba Philonica, ΑΓΑΛΜΑΤΟΦΟΡΕΙΝ, and the Authenticity of the De Resurrectione Attributed to Athenagoras", *Vigiliae Chrisianae* 46:4 (1992) 313-327).

[833] Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* 3; cf. Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 6, 67.

[834] For discussion see Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* xxv-xxvi; Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 28; Runia, "Verba Philonica", 324.

[835]This is based on references to co-rulership (Leg 18.2), to the titles *Armeniakois* and *Sarmatikois,* and to "deep peace" (cf. PAX AETERNA on Roman coins). See Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* x-xi; Grant, "Chronology", 28-29.

[836] T. D. Barnes, "The Embassy of Athenagoras", *JTS* 26 (1975) 111; cf. Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 22. Schoedel objects, supposing the *Legatio* is too long and too vague to be an actual embassy (Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* xii).

[837] Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 22

[838]Barnes, "Embassy of Athenagoras", 114.

[839] Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 67

[840] Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 74; Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 12;

[841] Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 51

[842] Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 12; Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 44; Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* xix

[843] Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 12. For example, Athenagoras rejects the worship of elements (Leg 15; Didask 15.1; Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 48).

[844] Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 12; Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 49;

with Platonism.[845] Whilst Schoedel is critical of Athenagoras' attempt at philosophy,[846] Rankin diagnoses that behind the *Legatio* is a Christian philosopher engaging with the themes current in Middle Platonism: first principles (i.e. God, matter, forms, world; cf. Leg 7.2), the Forms, daemons, intermediaries, the temporality of creation, the identification of God with the creator, and of particular significance for the *Legatio*, the distinction between Being and Becoming.[847] Athenagoras will use this latter distinction to shape his argument for the priority of God above matter, and thus any other supposed god. This line of reasoning is not found in biblical or patristic sources prior to Athenagoras: it derives from Justin (cf. Tatian), and their joint engagement with Platonism.[848] Athenagoras makes apology for Plato, asserting that he made a distinction between God and the created gods (6.2; 23.7) and that it was to make accommodation for the masses that wrote about the traditional gods (23.8) and named God "Zeus" (23.9-10; cf. Phaedr 246e). He also feels compelled to compare Christian views to those of Plato (e.g. 36.3).

This being said, Athenagoras is not a slave to Plato and frequently "corrects" Platonic concepts in light of the Christian tradition. For example, he does not identify God as the Good but ascribes to God the attribute of goodness (24.2).[849] Unlike Numenius, he does not split "Maker and Father", but identifies them as a single God (6.2; cf. Justin). He rejects the three first principles of contemporary Platonism (God-Forms-Matter; Atticus fr.26; Alcinous, *Didask.* 8.1; 9.1; 10.1; Apuleius, *De Platone* 1.5), allowing only a single eternal God as first principle. Though allowing that Plato "came to understand the eternal God apprehended by mind and reason" (23.7), he does not go as far as Justin or earlier apologists. "Plato is not a Christian before Christ but one who hovered on the verge of the idea of revelation".[850] The philosophers failed to find Being, "since they would not stoop to learn about God from God" (i.e. they did not consult the prophets; 7.2). Philosophy may discover some divine truth, but it is unreliable; "worldly wisdom and prophetic wisdom differ from one another as truth differs from probability" (24.6).

Barnard is, perhaps, too reluctant to see Platonism as modifying Athenagoras' thought, saying "he was careful to adopt from Middle Platonism only what he needed".[851] Athenagoras is not simply picking philosophic sound-bites in defence of Christianity, but seems fully-engaged with modifying Platonic metaphysics from Christian perspective.[852] This does not mean he adopts Platonic concepts uncritically, but he is engaging with Platonism on its own terms, using its own language and utilizing its ontology.

Rankin is correct that the relationship between Athenagoras and Plutarch "could well bear closer examination".[853] To the Platonic theme of the essential reliability and goodness of God, which Rankin cites, could be added many parallels. Malherbe notes that the argument in the *Legatio's* ethical sections is "largely constructed along lines

[845] Rankin notes several allusions to Plato (Leg 4.1 / Tim 28a; Leg 4.2 / Tim 28c; Leg 19.2 / Tim 27d (Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 52).
[846] Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* xv, xxi
[847] Rankin, Athenagoras, 50
[848] Rankin, Athenagoras, 53
[849] Cf. Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 58; Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 45
[850] Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 47; cf. L. W. Barnard, "God, the Logos, the Spirit and the Trinity in the Theology of Athenagoras", *Studia Theologica* 24:1 (1970) 79
[851] Barnard, "Theology of Athenagoras", 73;cf. Barnard, *Athenagoras,* 51
[852] Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* xxii
[853] Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 167

found in Plutarch's anti-Epicurean writings".[854]Plutarch, like Athenagoras, makes a distinction between the created and uncreated [ἀγέννητον] gods (6.2; De Iside 351 C-D). Plutarch, like Athenagoras, posits a semi-independent nous-and-logos and uses the same word to describe its coming forth (προῆλθεν; 10.2-3; De Iside 376 C). Plutarch, like Athenagoras, considers the nous of God to be the paradigm (10.2; De Iside 373F). Plutarch, like Athenagoras, posits an effluence [ἀπορροὴ] of God that penetrates matter (10.4; De Iside 371B). Athenagoras would not have agreed with Plutarch's religious devotion; he may have applied a Christian "filter" to Plutarch's, works but we need not commit to Athenagoras knowing Plutarch's works directly. One studying Platonic philosophy in Athens at this time was bound to be familiar with Plutarch's views.

Athenagoras on God

Athenagoras does not present an argument for the existence of God, though the brief mention of the orderly arrangement of the world as "signs conducive to piety" (4.2) shows how he might argue for it. His purpose is not to prove the existence of the divine, but rather to challenge the accusations of atheism made against the Christians because they recognised only one God and rejected the worship of the traditional gods. His defence appeals to the testimonies of philosophers and poets who also criticised traditional forms of polytheism (5.1) and (could be interpreted to have) posited one God (6.2). But Athenagoras also makes a philosophical defence of monotheism, utilising the Platonic distinction between Being and Becoming, which he equates with God and matter; something done only implicitly by Justin. Matter, as Becoming, is thus not eternal (19.4), but created (4.2). Idols, which are material, are not Being and consequently not God (15.1f). The elements have their origin from matter and are thus not God (22.2). The gods come into being and are subject to change and thus are not God (20.1f). "For either they are something uncreated and so eternal; or they are created and so perishable" (Leg 19.1). The corollary of this line of argument is that for Athenagoras matter is not eternal and thus not a first principle. In contrast to contemporary Platonism, he recognises only one first principle, and that is God (=Being; cf. 7:1; 8:7).[855]

The identification of Being and God, though not controversial amongst Platonists, has implications for the nature and attributes of God. He does not come into being (=eternal) nor does he become (= unchanging; cf. 22.3). To this, he adds that God is "invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, and infinite" (10.1). Unlike Justin, he does not say that God is nameless or unutterable,[856] and though he is incomprehensible and inaccessible (16.3), he is not unknowable, being apprehended by mind and reason (and revealed by the prophets).[857] Though Athenagoras does not press a negative theology into the service of making an argument for intermediaries, he does assert the self-sufficiency of God ("God is himself all things to himself" 16.3).

Athenagoras also presents a philosophical argument for the oneness of God (cf. Justin, Dial 5). If there were two uncreated things, they would either be the same type of thing or independent. They could not be similar because that similarity would imply the existence of a shared paradigm (and thus they could not be uncreated). They could not be independent, because there is no place for a second God alongside the first; the Maker controls the world and fills the region above the world. There is an implied assumption

[854]A. J. Malherbe, "Athenagoras on Christian Ethics", *JEH* 20:1 (1969) 4.
[855] Cf. Rankin, *Athenagoras*, 106-110
[856] Barnard, "Theology of Athenagoras", 76
[857] Barnard, "Theology of Athenagoras", 70, 77

that the very fact of being dissimilar would make two uncreated things independent and unable to share the region above the world (8.1-7). Athenagoras also seems to imply that only one uncreated thing could be responsible for the creation of the world, though this argument is not articulated (8.8). He couples these arguments with the support of scripture for the oneness of God, asserting that the philosophical arguments might be considered "man-made" (and thus be dismissed; 9.1).

"For Athenagoras, however, there could of course be no question but that the Supreme God and the Demiurge were one".[858] Athenagoras identifies the one God as "maker and father" (Leg 6.2), as demiurge (13.3) and as the "active cause" (19.4). This is not to deny the activity of the Logos or the Spirit – all things were "created" by the Logos and are "upheld" by the Spirit" (6.2) – but they are "his" Logos and "his" Spirit, so their actions are the actions of God. God has also set angels over different aspects of the world, (24.3) and a spirit (= the Devil) over the administration of matter (24.2), though he later violated his office (24.5).

Athenagoras on the Logos

Having argued that there is one God and ridiculed the anthropomorphisms of traditional polytheism, Athenagoras anticipates an objection about the Son (10.2). Having drawn a sharp distinction between Being (the uncreated God) and Becoming (created things); he has a choice to either place the Son within the category of Being or Becoming. He had the option of positing the Son as a created being, as he regards the angels (and the devil; cf. 24:2-5), and I have suggested that Justin took this option, but there are several reasons why Athenagoras felt compelled to resist this conclusion. Firstly, he wanted to avoid any suggestion that this Father-Son relationship is in any way analogous to those of the traditional gods, as described by the poets, who "present the gods as no better than men" (10.2).[859] Secondly, he believes the Son to be a god and thus, by definition, the Son must be identified as Being. Thirdly - and this seems to be decisive - the Son is also identified as the creator: "through him all things came into existence, which presupposes that the Father and the Son are one" (10.2). To unpack the argument a little, Athenagoras has inherited the tradition that the Son (as Logos) was instrumental to the creation of the world, and has reasoned that because the creator must be unbegotten, there can be only one creator, thus he concludes that the Son must be identified with the one creator. It is interesting to note the comparison with contemporary philosophers. Numenius, for example, did not see a problem with distinguishing the first cause from the creator of the world, presumably because he was able to distinguish two separate acts or causations: the final and efficient causes of the world. In this regard, Athenagoras is closer to Alcinous.

Having committed himself to two distinct persons (Father and Son) being identified as a single God, Athenagoras feels compelled to explain what "Son" means (10.3). His answer, in presentation, if not substance, is Platonic: "The Son of God is the mind [νοῦς] and reason [λόγος] of the Father" (10.2). The utility of the Platonic Nous for Athenagoras is its quasi-independent status (cf. Plutarch). He can comfortably talk of Father and Nous separately without implying that they are separate. This also allows Athenagoras to reconcile the Christian description of the Son as "first begotten" with his conclusion that the Son as creator is necessarily uncreated. God is "eternal mind" [νοῦς ἀΐδιος] and "eternally rational" [αιδΐως λογικὸς] and so had the Son "in himself" from

[858] Rankin, *Athenagoras*, 67
[859] Barnard, "Theology of Athenagoras", 82

the beginning; but the Son did "come forth" [προελθών] from God (10.3).[860]Here, we see the beginnings of the distinction between begotten ("first begotten" [πρῶτον γέννημα]) and created ("not ... came into existence" [γενόμενον]).[861] There are two possible interpretations of Athenagoras here: he posited a proto-orthodox eternal generation of the Son, or alternatively he might be interpreted as meaning that God had the faculty of reason [λογικός] prior to the (temporal) generation of the (personal) Logos at the moment of creation (cf. Puech).[862] It seems probable that he intended the former, since he seems to regard "eternal" as the opposite of "coming into existence", though he is not explicit. Athenagoras believes he has scriptural support for the eternal generation of the Son, though the passage he cites states explicitly that Wisdom was created [ἔκτισέν] (Prov 8:22). This would seem to imply his concept of the coming forth of the Son is more Platonic than biblical.

Athenagoras also identifies the Son as the Idea [ἰδέα] for creation (10.2). Like his Platonic contemporaries (cf. Alcinous), Athenagoras presupposed a distinction between Ideas (ἰδέα) and Forms (εἶδος) – terms used interchangeably by Plato. As Ruskin draws out, Athenagoras distinguishes the immanent Forms, "Forms-in-Matter" (τὰ εἴδη τὰ ἐν τῇ ὑλῃ; e.g. 15.4), from the transcendent Idea (= the Son).[863] "It may in fact be that Athenagoras' employment of εἶδος rather than ἰδέα here may be a way of underlining that, for him, the philosophers did not actually know the true 'Idea' but merely those objects which are modelled in some way or other on that primary and sole 'Idea'".[864] Here again we see Athenagoras engaging in a contemporary philosophical discussion, this time the relationship between the Ideas and God. He identifies the Nous with a singular Idea, which is the paradigm from which the Forms are copied. Yet the Idea is not passive, but is also identified as the creative ἐνεργείᾳ; "for in his likeness and through him all things came into existence" (10.2). This is not a discussion needed to justify the Christian claim to theism, but it is obviously a discussion that he, as a philosopher, was engaged in and presupposes when he writes his apology.

Athenagoras does not refer to the incarnation or to any part of the human life of Jesus. Schoedel asserts that this is because the doctrine was too controversial for his audience.[865] Rankin is fairer, suggesting that perhaps he could not fit a demonstration of the doctrine within the framework he'd laid out, and his emphasis on the dichotomy between God and matter.[866] He does touch on the issue when he says, "yet if a god assumes flesh by divine dispensation, is he forthwith a slave of lust?" (21.4), anticipating

[860] Cf. "This fable teaches by its legend that the mind [νοῦς] and reason [λόγος] of the god, fixed amid the unseen and invisible, advanced [προῆλθεν] to generation [γένεσιν] by means of motion" (Plutarch, *De Iside* 376 C)

[861]We might expect Athenagoras to avail himself of the work of Calvenus Taurus, who distinguished four meanings for the word *genetos* to explain how Plato can say the world was "created" (Tim 28B) and yet maintain the eternity of the world (preserved in John Philoponus, *On the Eternity of the World;* cf. Dillon, *Middle Platonists,* 242-3). The third definition ("the cosmos is said to be 'created' as being always in process of generation") and the fourth ("one might also call it 'created' by virtue of the fact that it is dependent for its existence on an outside source, to wit, God") might be apt for this purpose. However Athenagoras does not redefine *genetos* but simply rejects that it applies to the Logos, who was begotten. It may be that the work of Taurus provided an intellectual climate in which the concept of generation without beginning was available.

[862] Barnard, "Theology of Athenagoras", 84

[863] Rankin, *Athenagoras*, 58

[864] Rankin, *Athenagoras*, 58

[865] Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* xviii

[866] Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 133-4

the response to his remarks that the idea of a god being corporeal and having blood being "laughable nonsense" (21.1).[867]The word translated "dispensation" is οἰκονομίαν, the term used by Ignatius for incarnation (Ign. *Eph* 18:2).[868]

Athenagoras on the Spirit

Athenagoras does not say much about the Spirit. Barnard reasons that "the deity of the Holy Spirit raised no special problem once it was conceded that Godhead was not unitary".[869] This might be true for Christians for whom the Spirit is strongly associated with God as his presence and power, but for a non-Christian audience, a third person/thing to be encapsulated within Being would certainly require demonstration. In any case, though naming both Father and Son as "God", Athenagoras in no place refers to the Spirit as "God". The answer may well be that Athenagoras does not regard the Spirit as a person, and so the question of the deity of the Spirit did not arise. Rankin's assessment is probably more apt: "Athenagoras does not have a highly developed doctrine of the Spirit".[870]

The Spirit is primarily the inspirer of the prophets (cf. 7.3; 10.4), but also the guiding presence of God (5.3) and the means by which he sustains [συνέχεται] creation (6.2). Rankin draws the parallel with Stoic belief about the "breathing [pneumatic] substance" which sustains the material; breath as the means by which God pervades the whole world.[871] This parallel was not lost on Athenagoras, who noted how Stoics said that "the Spirit of God" moves through matter (6.4). Now, as Rankin writes, "Athenagoras does not actively endorse the Stoic account of the Spirit's pervasion of matter, but simply argues that the Stoic position implies the oneness of God".[872]Yet the fact that Athenagoras equates the Stoic description of the immanence of God in matter with the activity of the Spirit is instructive. These Stoic views of the immanence of God in the world had long since penetrated Platonism, adding to the concept of the World Soul. It is, then, perhaps significant that Athenagoras describes the Spirit as an "effluence" [ἀπόρροιαν] from God (10.4); the same word Plutarch uses to describe the emission of the rational world soul (De Iside 371B).[873] Athenagoras says that God's works are held in rein [ἡνιοχεῖται] by the Spirit. The same word is used in the myth of the charioteer (*Phaedrus* 246a,b) – a text that, according to Malherbe, stands behind Middle Platonic discussions of the World Soul, particularly in Atticus and Plutarch.[874]

Now in Plutarch, the rational world soul is the nous of God, whereas in Athenagoras there seems a distinction between the nous (= Son) and the Spirit. This difference may, in part, be explained by his dependence on Justin. Athenagoras uses the analogy of rays of

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[867] Schoedel, *Athenagoras,* 47n2
[868] Barnard, "Theology of Athenagoras", 87
[869] Barnard, "Theology of Athenagoras", 87
[870] Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 135
[871] Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 135-6; citing Galen, *On Bodily Mass* 7.525.9-14; Galen, *Symposium of the Book on Pulses* 9.458.8-14; Clement, *Stromateis* 8.9.33.1-9; Alexander, *On Mixture* 225.1-2; Aetius, *Placita,* 1.7.33;
[872] Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 136
[873] Barnard suggests some parallels with Wisdom (Wisd 7:25-26) and Gnostic aeons (Barnard, "Theology of Athenagoras", 90). Rankin draws attention to the use of the word in Philo, though he never uses it of the Spirit (Rankin, *Athenagoras,* 138). Hebrews 1:3 uses the word about Jesus.
[874]A. J. Malherbe, "The Holy Spirit in Athenagoras", *JTS* 20 (1969) 540-1. Malherbe argues that Athenagoras alludes to this passage on several occasions throughout the *Legatio* (citing 23.5; 22.7; 25.1).

the sun for the Spirit (10.4); Justin uses this same analogy for the Logos (Dial 128). For Justin, the Logos and the Spirit were, at times, conflated; it has been proposed that he views the Spirit as the lower aspect of the Logos (cf. Numenius). It is possible that Athenagoras follows this distinction. Some hint of this may be seen in the fact that, although Athenagoras makes no use of the concept of the *logos spermatikos*, he does propose a similar concept for the poets and philosophers coming to the truth; "each of them moved by his own soul through some affinity with the breath of God" (7.2). Though he uses the term πνοῆς rather than πνευμα, it is probable that the Spirit is the referent. We have seen that Tatian thought that a "spark" of the Holy Spirit remained within the human soul, and this spark prompts humans to search for God. Athenagoras, arguing for some "affinity" between the human soul and the Spirit, may be using a similar concept. The shift from *logos spermatikos* to spark of the Spirit may be explicable as motivated by the desire to ascribe immanence within the human soul to the lower aspect (i.e. Spirit) rather than the higher (i.e. Logos).

Regarding the term "effluence", Barnard writes "the term in no way implies that the apologist *only* thought of the Spirit in terms of function and had no notion of His distinct personality".[875] But it seems difficult to substantiate this conclusion. Athenagoras says little that could be pressed into evidence either way. He does not ascribe the name "God" to the Spirit as he does Father and Son (cf. 10.5).

Athenagoras on Triads

Given the above, we should not be surprised to find some triadic statements in the *Legatio.* Whilst emphasizing that there is one uncreated God, he has identified two other aspects: the Word, by which all things were created, and the Spirit, by which all things are sustained (6.2). Though he does also posit "a host of angels" (10.5), "the prince over matter" (i.e. the devil; 24.5) and demons (25.1), these are created things, whilst both the Word and the Spirit proceed uncreated from the uncreated God. Athenagoras has divided the world into two categories: Being (= God) and Becoming (= created things) – there are only three things in the former category.

Athenagoras has two triadic summaries of Christian teaching (10.5; 24.2). In both passages, Athenagoras explains that the three are unified by "power" [δύναμιν] but diverse in "rank" [τάξει] (cf. Justin, 1 Apol 13.3). Unity in power does not imply mere functional co-operation or parallelism; as we have seen, Athenagoras holds these three to be ontologically one. Diversity in rank would seem to imply subordination. Barnard counters that τάξις in Athenagoras means "order", not "rank",[876] which might imply that the three have different positions without any sense of hierarchy. In this context, it is useful to consider what use Athenagoras makes of Plato's Second Letter, which he quotes in relation to Plato's views on the "first power" [πρώτης δυνάμεως] and going on to mention the "second" and the "third" (23.7; cf. Justin, 1 Apol 60.6-7). Though he draws no parallel here between the Second Letter and the Christian triad, he is describing the affinities of Plato's teaching with his own. It is reasonable to suppose that Athenagoras was content to enumerate Father, Son and Spirit as first, second and third, and it was in this sense that they were to be differentiated by rank. This coheres with his identification of the Logos as Platonic Nous and the Spirit as the World Soul, but unlike his Platonic contemporaries, Athenagoras believes that these three are also one God (= Being).

[875] Barnard, "Theology of Athenagoras, 90
[876] Barnard, "Theology of Athenagoras", 85

f. Summary

In one sense, there is only one divine triad in the Christian tradition. The doctrine of the Trinity, as it would later be defined as three coequal and coeternal Persons in one Substance, had not taken shape by the end of the second century. But the three constituents – Father, Son and Spirit – were each distinguished and yet each subsumed within Being (= God). In another sense, there are several different divine triads in the Christian tradition, as successive thinkers have configured the three constituents differently. Most significantly, it took time for a divine triad to emerge in the Christian tradition and its emergence, at least according to our extant evidence, coincides with the period when Christians were beginning to engage with Platonism.

It is the "school" of Justin that first presents a divine triad; this triad is explicitly enumerated by Justin and implicitly followed by Tatian and Athenagoras. The triad presented by this school is a hierarchical triad of three powers: God, Logos and Spirit. God is identified as Being, eternal and unbegotten, and is thus accorded transcendence and pre-eminence above creation. Though identified as the Creator, he uses intermediaries to interact with world; both Tatian and Athenagoras are explicit in ascribing the activity of creation to the Logos. Second in rank is the Logos, identified by Justin as the second God. Whilst Justin seems to imply that the Logos is something distinct from Being, Athenagoras incorporates the Logos (as creator) into the category of Being and so into the identity of God. For Justin, the Logos is clearly noetic; for Athenagoras, the Logos is explicitly identified as the mind (*nous*) of God. Whilst Justin is largely silent about the creative function of the Logos, both Tatian and Athenagoras describe a two-stage creation: a noetic (potential) creation within the Logos and a material (actual) creation through the Logos as the instrument. Justin introduces the doctrine of the spermatic logos, whereby knowledge of God is seeded throughout mankind; Tatian (and possibly Athenagoras) seems to ascribe a similar function to the Spirit. Third in rank is the Spirit, which is ascribed the function of inspiring the prophets, but also has some demiurgic function. Justin may hint at a role of the Spirit as sustaining creation; this is explicit in Athenagoras. The Spirit is described in the most immanent terms; for Athenagoras (and possibly Tatian) the Spirit permeates matter. Justin seems, at best, unclear about the distinct functions of the Logos and the Spirit, and it is possible he identified them, perhaps viewing the Spirit as the lower aspect of the Logos. A similar lack of clarity is displayed by Tatian. Athenagoras seems to have reconciled two distinct functions for the Logos and the Spirit.

This hierarchical triad owes something to preceding tradition. The Logos-doctrine developed by the "school" of Justin is based upon the identification of Jesus with Word/Wisdom. The emphasis on the transcendence of God, which necessitates the hierarchical arrangement, finds some precedent in the Hellenised Christianity of Ignatius and more in the philosophic Christianity of Aristides. The immanence of the Spirit in matter is not too distant from OT theology regarding the sustaining role of the Spirit as the power of God in creation. But the triadic configuration, the hierarchy that placed the Spirit in a third rank, and specific functions of the three constituents are innovations for the Christian tradition.

7. Divine Triads and the Trinity

a. Introduction

The purpose of this study has been to explore the range of divine triads that were posited concurrently with the emergence of the Christian triad to explore whether any other triad provides significant precedent for what would become the Trinity. I have confined the study intentionally to Middle Platonic and Gnostic triads, as it was those two systems that had the greatest interaction with Christianity during the period in question, and these are therefore are the most likely candidates for any influence upon the development of Christian doctrine. The study of the two systems named has revealed the potential for influence between them, given the interaction of Gnostics and Platonism; the influence of Platonism on Gnosticism is demonstrable and the reserve is also possible. This interaction raises the possibility of indirect influence of one system upon Christianity through the other.

Whilst the doctrine of the Trinity would come to be defined as three Persons in Substance, structurally a coordinate triad of three co-equal and co-eternal constituents, Christianity had not yet arrived at this definition. As diagnosed above, the first significant divine triad within the Christian tradition was a hierarchical triad, descending from transcendence to immanence. This hierarchical structure is still evident in the works of later writers, such as Irenaeus, who nevertheless insist on the unity of the triad. It is this hierarchical triad for which we are looking for comparators in Platonism and Gnosticism.

b. Christianity and Gnosticism

Gnosticism, and its cognates systems, posited a variety of triads. Given that one of the possible origins of Gnosticism is Christianity itself, it might be suggested that the presence of triads within Gnosticism is evidence of some triadic concepts within whichever Christian tradition belonged to the same period and location from which that Gnosticism arose. For example, writing about the baptismal formula, Logan comments, "the similarity but difference of the Gnostic Trinity to that of 'mainstream' Christians is surely no coincidence".[877] The problem with such a suggestion is that, whilst it is conceivable that the Gnostics adopted a trine baptismal formula in semblance to the Christian trine baptismal formula, it is difficult to account for the three constituents of the (Barbeloite) Gnostic familial triad as developments upon those of the later Christian Trinity. This is particularly evident in the comparison of the mother-figure and the Holy Spirit. Also, given the variety of triads posited during this period, it is no strain of credulity for coincidence to be a likely explanation.

Griffiths, convinced of some connection between Egyptian divine triads and the Christian Trinity, has suggested "the possible influence of Egypt on early [Christian] theological development is to some extent linked to the evolution of Gnosticism".[878] This suggestion derives some plausibility from the significant Gnostic presence in Egypt and the interaction of Gnosticism with Christianity. Elsewhere, I have sought to explain two Gnostic triads (Barbeloite and Ophite) as rooted in Egyptian theogonies, which, if

[877] Logan, "Five Seals", 192
[878] Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, 248

correct, would substantiate one part of the chain that Griffiths speculates.[879] If it could be shown that either Gnostic triad was influential on the emergence of the hierarchical triad (as posited by Justin), then we could link Griffiths' work on Egyptian triads with the Christian Trinity. However, there seem to be two problems with this second link. Firstly, it seems difficult to establish any plausible historical link between the Gnostics and the "school" of Justin. Secondly, the familial triad seems a poor parallel with the hierarchical triad of Justin.

The most substantive link between Gnosticism and the "school" of Justin is the Valentinian Ptolemy. It is possible that this was the Ptolemy named by Justin as a martyr, though the evidence is largely circumstantial. There are also linguistic parallels between Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* and Tatian's *Oration,* and it is possible that Tatian engaged with this "public" aspect of Ptolemy's thought. Nevertheless, neither Justin nor Tatian was a Gnostic; they did not cite Gnostic texts and they did not adopt any of the mythological underpinnings of the Gnostic systems. Justin condemns Valentinians as "atheists, impious, unrighteous, and sinful" (Dial 35). Therefore, there is not a strong *a priori* expectation to find the "school" of Justin adopting a Gnostic triad.[880]

Ptolemy's familial triad (Father-Ennoia-Nous) has few similarities with the hierarchical triad of Justin. Since Justin contrasts the Logos with Athena, it could be argued that the Logos has greater affinities with Ennoia than with Nous; but Justin derided the view that first thought was female. Any similarities that there are between Justin's Logos and Ptolemy's Nous are better explained by mutual dependence on Platonism. For Justin, the Spirit is in no sense a mother-figure or a consort of God. The other iterations of the familial triad also make for poor comparison. Arguably, the Barbeloite triad is closer to the Christian triad in that it explicitly names the son-figure as Christ, but there is no parallel between the Spirit and the mother-figure, either as a passive principle or as first thought. As Grant says, the Barbeloite triad is "self-evidently not Christian", and "it has nothing to do – except verbally – with the Christian triad".[881]

Structurally, the Ophite three-male triad is closer to Justin's triad as it is a descending hierarchy, with the first place assigned to father-figure and the second place to a son. The identification of the son-figure as ennoia and the concept of the son existing within the father (as in the Ophite diagram) has some affinities with Justin's concept of the Logos as a noetic principle emanating from God. The third figure in the Ophite triad is the most immanent but in all versions exists in the spiritual realm. It is usually conceived as a saviour-figure, which fits poorly with the creative and inspirative functions ascribed to the Spirit by Justin. Arguably, the three sonships of Basilides (according to Hippolytus) are closer to Justin inasmuch as the third sonship has both a creative function as germ of the world and also serves to bring souls to completion. However, in this case the first sonship is something distinct from God, whilst the Holy Spirit is explicitly identified as a firmament, rather than as one of the three sonships.

Both the familial and three-male triads have some affinities with the triad of the "school" of Justin, but are insufficient to provide plausible precedent for this concept. The affinities are indicative of the fact that these two systems were developing in a shared milieu, of which Platonism was a major component. It is possible that a Platonic triad of

[879] Gaston, "Egyptian Background".
[880] See Grant, *Doctrine of God,* 88
[881] Grant, *Doctrine of God,* 89

God-Mind-Soul was one influence upon Gnostic triads. We have found reminiscences of such a triad in the *Tripartite Tractate* and in the reports of Plotinus about the Gnostics known to him. However, there was, at least, one restriction on the influence of Platonism upon Gnosticism, and that was the Gnostic contention that the demiurge was either a fallen spiritual being or a mistaken product of a spiritual being. The Gnostics would have been uncomfortable with any triad that included the demiurge, as that would bring the fault of creation too close to the first principle.

The other Gnostic triad diagnosed was the Triple-Powered One, found in the "Platonizing" Gnostic texts, of three figures representing the three stages of the emergence of Barbelo from the Invisible One. This triad is significant because of its close structural parallels to the Christian Trinity. The Triple-Powered One has three constituents, who proceed one from another but are co-ordinate and form a single entity. Though not described in terms of three Persons in one Substance, these three aeons are a One. Functionally, however, the three constituents of the Triple-Powered One are very different from the Christian Trinity. The Triple-Powered One is structurally dissimilar from the hierarchical triad of the "school" of Justin and the concept is unlikely to predate Justin's work. I have argued that Plotinus and his followers were acquainted with earlier recessions of the "Platonizing" Gnostic texts (such as *Zostrainos* and *Allogenes*), which would indicate that the three-in-one Gnostic triad was extant by the early third century. This seems to be corroborated by the presence of a cognate triad in *The Great Declaration.* I have also argued that the impression of the being-life-mind triad upon the Triple-Powered One was an addition to later recessions of the "Platonizing" Gnostic texts. Furthermore, Rasimus has argued that the Neoplatonists based their being-life-mind triad upon the Gnostic three-in-one triad.[882] This is significant because of the influence of Neoplatonic being-life-mind triad upon Christian theologians in the fourth and fifth centuries in developing the concept of a coordinate trinity.[883] If this chain of influence is substantiated, then we can link some aspects of the Christian Trinity to Gnostic concepts. However, these aspects are secondary and do not explain the origins of a divine triad within the Christian tradition.

In sum, there were several different triads that featured in Gnostic mythologies, but these are unlikely precedents for the Christian divine triad.

c. Christianity and Platonism

There are a number of triads in Middle Platonism, but not all of them are significant comparators for Christianity. The first principles of God, Forms and Matter are not a divine triad and are of little relevance. The isosceles triad of Eudorus, the One above a pair of opposites, is dissimilar to anything in Christianity (none of the constituents of Christian triads are ever considered to be opposites) and is unlikely to have been influential, unless it be through Philo (cf. Theophilus). The tripartite divisions of the universe, with attendant powers, are, perhaps, indicative of a fondness for threes, but are little further help, not least because Christianity did not adopt similar cosmological divisions.

However, there are a number of hierarchical triads posited by the Middle Platonists, which are therefore structurally similar to the triad of the "school" of Justin. In the Neopythagorean tradition we have three intelligible natures (Thrasyllus), three Ones

[882] Rasimus, "Stoic Ingredients", 257-270
[883] Dillon, "Logos and Trinity", 7-13

(Moderatus), three intellects (*Chaldean Oracles*) and three gods (Numenius). This Neopythagorean tradition intersects another Platonic tradition, witnessed by Plutarch and Atticus, of God and his emanating intellect above a world soul. These two strands would ultimately lead to the Plotinian triad (One-Intellect-Soul).

There is an *a priori* plausibility about some influence of Platonism upon Christianity during the second half of the second century. Justin studied as a Platonist before converting to Christianity; Athenagoras may also have been a Platonist before his conversion. Plato is quoted by the "school" of Justin, and Platonic terminology is used. The structural parallels between the hierarchical triads of the Middle Platonists and that of the "school" of Justin warrant closer comparison. However, we should also note the disagreement of the "school" of Justin with the Platonists. Whilst Justin seems favourably disposed towards Plato, he does have some criticisms; Tatian gives nothing but antagonism towards pagans. These attitudes are partly explained by rhetorical purpose. Justin, writing a defence of Christianity for a pagan audience, has good reason to be charitable about the heroes of pagan philosophy; Tatian, writing to draw adherents towards Christianity (and away from paganism) has good reason for his antagonism. But philosophically, the disagreement was on specific points rather than being holistic. Justin portrays the chief point of departure as the immortality of the soul and thus the possibility of coming to knowledge of God without revelation. It is interesting that Justin bridges the gap between these two positions with the *spermatic logos,* which gives the possibility of knowledge of God to mortal souls through reason apart from revelation. Athenagoras specifies further points of disagreement, positing God as the sole first principle (to the exclusion of Forms and Matter) and asserting the temporality of creation. Yet such disagreements do not exclude these Christian thinkers from engaging with Platonism, but actually witness to their participation in the ongoing dialogue within the Platonic tradition. The "school" of Justin was creating a Christian philosophy with pagan terminology and concepts. Theology is seen as a study of Being; cosmogony is a discussion about demiurges and paradigms; epistemology is about a noetic approach towards God. Even if their conclusions are not Platonic orthodoxy, their conversation is in no small part Platonic. Whilst such a conversation is unlikely to result in Christians adopting ideas that explicitly contradict their own traditions, we should not be surprised by the incorporation of ideas that seem compatible with those traditions. For example, no Christian before Justin conceived of creation as involving, first, the creation of a paradigm (intelligible world) and, second, the creation of physical world, but such an idea is reconcilable with the Christian tradition, and Athenagoras adopted it. These Christian philosophers had an added inducement: Justin, amongst others, believed that Plato took his best ideas from Moses. The natural corollary is that any good idea of Plato ("good" here meaning "compatible with Christianity") can be accepted as a philosophical expression of the teaching of Moses.

If Christianity had had no pre-existing triadic tradition, then it is questionable whether the Platonic triad would have been influential upon Christian thinkers. But Justin had received a tradition of a liturgical triad, which gave him sufficient grounds for interpreting the Platonic triad as a Mosaic idea, and thus for reading the Christian liturgical triad onto the Platonic ontological triad. Conveniently, there was already some basis for the reconciliation, in language if not in function.[884]

[884] "This Triad of the philosophers, this language of the divine World as consisting of God, Logos, Psyche, was too similar to the Christian Triad, God, Son, Pneuma, to pass unnoticed by these early Christian

In Platonic triads, the first constituent is often identified as "God", but also as "King" and "Lord", resonating with biblical descriptions of God. More importantly, this first constituent is often called "Father", as was the first constituent of the Christian liturgical triad. For a number of Platonists, God is identified as Being, a description with some biblical resonance (cf. Ex 3:14) and a concept that the "school" of Justin embraces. Christianity already ascribed some descriptions of transcendence to God, such as "invisible", and others may have been familiar from Hellenised Judaism (e.g. "unnameable"). It was no stretch to add to the pre-eminence (and the presumed reverence) of God by accepting Platonic expressions of the transcendence of God. Christians could not deny that God was the Creator, but this does not prevent the "school" of Justin from ascribing the agency of creation to the Logos (and the Spirit). This ambiguity over the demiurgic function is not unlike the ambiguity found with the handbook of Alcinous.

The second constituent of the Platonic triads is usually an intellect (νοῦς) or is in some way equivalent to the intelligible realm as the totality or vehicle of the Forms. The identification of Jesus with the mind of God finds some precedence in Ignatius (Ign. *Eph* 3:2). The semantic breadth of λόγος allowed the identification of Jesus as God's word (John 1:1) to be read as identification of Jesus as God's rational faculty. This corresponds to the use of the term in the Platonic tradition, where λόγος is used for the thought of God (Thrasyllus) or for the paradigm (Nicomachus); Plutarch uses λόγος as a synonym for νοῦς. Justin gives little by way of cosmogony but hints that the Logos is the vehicle of the intelligible creation; Athenagoras is more explicit. The other function often ascribed to the second constituent of Platonic triads is demiurgic activity, and here Tatian and Athenagoras at least agree. There is some NT precedent for using the language of creation (at least) about Jesus (Col 1:16) and about the Logos (John 1:3) but for the "school" of Justin the agency of the Son in creation is more explicit. There is resonance with the Platonic concept of a transcendent God, who does not act directly in world, and a demiurgic agent, who does.

The third constituent of Platonic triads was psychical, often explicitly identified as the World Soul. The fact that the terms πνεῦμα and ψυχή are sometimes used synonymously in the NT allows for comparison with the Holy Spirit. In addition, the NT function of the Holy Spirit as the power and presence of God acting in the world (primarily in believers) is akin to the function of the World Soul as the immanence of God in the world. Whilst the "school" of Justin retains the primary function of the Holy Spirit as inspirer of the prophets, it adopts a number of descriptions that resonate with the Platonic World Soul. These involve the enlivening of souls, the pervasion of matter and some demiurgic function.

Griffiths writes, "what is apparently missing in the Greek philosophical triads is the principle of tri-unity in the sense of Tertullian's *una substantia tres personae*".[885] This is true with regards to the Middle Platonic triads that prompted the Christian triad of the "school" of Justin. Yet, as we have seen, Athenagoras was already developing a philosophical argument from the Platonic category of Being to the subsumation of Logos

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theologians"; T. A. Marsh, *The Triune God: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Study* (Blackrock: The Columbia Press, 1994) 53

[885] Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, 284

and Spirit within the category of God.[886] Christians, as monotheists, were motivated towards unity, but it is only with a shift in the ontological status of Logos and Spirit that the Christian triad becomes one God.

d. Does the Doctrine of the Trinity rest on a mistake?

In an article, Maurice Wiles explored the proposition that the Trinity can be known through the threefold activity of God in the world. The difficulty he advances is "the impossibility of finding such a clear-cut threefold division of activity"; whichever three activities one chooses, it seems possible to find them ascribed to more than one person (of the Trinity) in Christian tradition.[887] Wiles finds examples of this ambivalence in the early Christian period; "the thought of the earliest Fathers about God was not so unfailingly threefold in character that they were forced to think in trinitarian terms".[888] So Wiles poses himself the question, why, if the activities of God were not understood as being distinctly threefold, did Christians come to adopt the doctrine of the Trinity to express the nature of God? "The answer appears to be that threefold form was a basic datum for Christian thought from the very beginning ... from a comparatively early time it seems to have provided the framework for semi-credal confessions, summaries of the faith, and baptismal practice".[889] In support of this conclusion he argues that when the early Fathers "speak most clearly in a threefold trinitarian fashion about God are passages in which there are definite allusions to baptism or which read like stereotyped summaries of the faith along lines given in catechetical instruction".[890] For Wiles, this answers the question posed by D. M. Edwards, "if one wanted to 'hypostatize' other divine attributes, why stop at the 'Spirit' of God?"[891] The number of the Godhead had already been determined by the baptismal formula. Sarah Coakley summarises his argument as follows: "once the triadic baptismal formula became fixed, quite early in the church's life, it exercised a strongly authoritative – but ultimately 'arbitrary' – clamp on more properly critical reflection".[892] "In other words, the church was duped by its own authority and tradition".[893]

Coakley attempts to offer some responses to problem Wiles has identified. Firstly, she argues that some assistance is offered by Richard of St Victor's argument to the Trinity from mutual love of the three persons;[894] this need not detain us. Secondly, she argues that the Spirit does have a distinct activity as the means of the incorporation of the believer into the Trinitarian life of God and through the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer through prayer.[895] Coakley diagnoses a hole in Wiles' argument, saying he "does not seek to probe back into the New Testament era, to argue why the triadic

[886] Cf. Marsh, *Triune God*, 59

[887] M. Wiles, "Some reflections on the origins of the doctrine of the Trinity", *JTS* 8:1 (1957) 95

[888] Wiles, "Some Reflections", 99. Kaiser articulates the same problem saying, "the only instances in the New Testament where the Spirit is said to manifest himself directly (Jesus' baptism and Pentecost) are so momentary and ephemeral that modalistic interpretation could not be ruled out without danger of arbitrariness" (C. B. Kaiser, "The Discernment of Triunity" in *One God in Trinity* (eds. P. Toon & J. D. Spiceland; London: Samule Bagster, 1980) 34).

[889] Wiles, "Some Reflections", 99

[890] Wiles, "Some Reflections", 99

[891] D. M. Edwards, *Christianity and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1932) 339, 354-5;

[892] Coakley, "Why Three?", 30.

[893] Coakley, "Why Three?", 31

[894] Coakley, "Why Three?", 36; Richard of St Victor, *On the Trinity* 3.14-15. I have raised questions about the validity of this argument in T. E. Gaston, review of R. Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, *The Heythrop Journal* 50:1 (2009) 168-9 and T. E. Gaston, *One God, the Father* (Newcastle: Willow, 2013)14-16.

[895] Coakley, "Why Three?", 36-37; Cf. Kaiser, "Discernment of Triunity", 35

baptismal formula gained the hold it did in the first place".[896] This formula was not plucked out of the air, but was a response to experience of the Spirit by the earliest Christians, from Pentacost onwards. She proposes that the reason that this appeal to the experience of the Spirit did not feature more prominently as a demonstration of the Trinity in the Fathers is because of their disquiet about the way some made such appeals: "Montanism gave the Spirit a bad name".[897] Whilst acknowledging that this "mystical" evidence would not meet Wiles' demand for evidence with demonstrative force sufficient to require the postulating of the Trinitarian nature of God, Coakley urges that it is a useful tool in "the church's mystic armoury".[898]

The response of Coakley to Wiles' questioning is useful as far as it goes, but does not, to my mind, fully address the problems that he raises. She is right to draw attention to the fact that Wiles offers no explanation of the origins of the baptismal formula. Her conclusions agree with my own analysis that it was the early Christian experience of the Spirit that prompted the third clause of the baptismal formula. The influence of the baptismal formula on the emergence of the Christian divine triad was not entirely arbitrary, though it was probably a "clamp". The problem Coakley acknowledges is that "an 'experience of the Spirit', however distinctive, would not necessarily lead to 'hypostatization', any more than dramatic prompting of the Spirit on the Hebrew Scriptures did".[899] My own analysis is that the earliest Christians saw the Spirit as the power and presence of God in the world. Whilst Coakley may have found an explanation for the threeness of the baptismal formula, to my mind this falls short of an explanation for the Christian triad. Neither Wiles nor Coakley provides an explanation as to why a three clause liturgy should become an ontological triad.

The thesis I have presented fills this gap. From an early period Christian tradition contained a threefold formula in the trine baptismal formula. This was an expression of the full Christian experience of God as a loving Father, Jesus as his Son and the Spirit as the living presence of God within believers. In the mid-second century, the three referents of the clauses of the baptismal formula gained new ontological significance through the engagement of certain Christians with the Middle Platonic triad(s). Justin feels compelled to coordinate the three clauses of the baptismal formula with the ontological triad posited in Pseudo-Plato's second letter; the compulsion is so strong that he goes to extraordinary interpretative lengths to demonstrate that Plato derived this triad from Moses. Athenagoras, who continues Justin's project, is more explicit in mapping Father, Son and Spirit on to God, Nous and World Soul. Taken in the round, the "school" of Justin shows significant Platonic influence that led to the emergence of an ontological triad from the threefold pattern provided by the baptismal liturgy. A philosophical argument for the oneness of the creator (= Being) led to the elevation of the ontological status of Son and Spirit. And so the foundations for the Christian trinity were put in place.

We can now answer the titular question in the affirmative. It seems that the emergence of a Christian divine triad in the mid-second century rests on the confusion (or conflation) of a liturgical triad for an ontological triad. The result was not simply a translation of NT concepts in philosophical terminology, but a Christian triad whose constituents are

[896] Coakley, "Why Three?", 40
[897] Coakley, "Why Three?", 44
[898] Coakley, "Why Three?", 48-9
[899] Coakley, "Why Three?", 42

imbued with new ontological status and attributes. Such a confusion is, perhaps, understandable, but nevertheless constitutes a departure from primitive Christianity towards (what would become) Christian Trinitarian orthodoxy.

e. A Watershed in Christian Doctrine?

It seems to me that Justin made a mistake, confusing the liturgical triad that he had received for an ontological triad equivalent to that of contemporary Platonists. He passed this mistake on to those who followed him, who developed this ontology further towards a tri-unity. However, is it plausible that Justin and those about him were able to cause such a profound shift in doctrinal development, such that we may hold them (in part) responsible for the emergence of the Christian Trinity?

Influence of Justin

Justin had a discernable impact on the proceeding generation.[900] Irenaeus of Lyons (180s) knew the works of Justin (AH 4.6.2; 5.26.2),[901] alludes to his *Apologies* (cf. Dem 34 / 1 Apol 60)[902] and *Dialogue,*[903]and may even have been a pupil of Justin.[904] He received some background in pagan philosophy, praising Plato (3.25.5), citing *Laws* and *Timaeus,* and incorporating Xenophanes account of the cosmic mind. [905] Despite his apparent lack of philosophical education, scholars detect within his works Platonic themes, including the Forms; Being-Becoming; innate ideas, and an argument from design. [906] Since Irenaeus is "not conscious of this Platonic pattern in his thought",[907] he may have received the schema from Justin.[908] Whilst consistently affirming that God is the Creator (1.31.3; Dem 4), Irenaeus also considers God to be above all properties, indescribable (2.13.4) and too transcendent to appear in theophanies (Dem 12, 44, 45; fr.23; fr.53/54). He reconciles this tension by positing the Logos as the worker of creation (4.38.3), and identifying the Logos as God/Being (cf. 4.20.5).[909] The Logos is Nous, but the Nous is the Father (2.17.7); the Nous is not emanated, (2.13.4-6) but in some unknown manner, the Son was begotten (2.28.5-6). The Spirit, also identified with God, has a distinct creative activity;[910] in many ways the Spirit acts like the Platonic world-soul, governing the world (3.6.4; Dem 5) and permeating matter (4.31.2; Dem 97). Occasionally, Irenaeus writes as though the Spirit proceeds from the Son (cf. Dem 5; 5.20.2). For Irenaeus, Father-Son-Spirit is a hierarchical triad (cf. 5.18.2; Dem 5) but also one God.

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[900] Minns & Parvis, *Justin,* 70

[901] See M. Slusser, "How much did Irenaeus learn from Justin?",*Studia Patristica* XL (eds. F. Young, M. Edwards & P. Parvis; Leuven: Peeters, 2006) 518-9.

[902] For other possible allusions see A. Robinson, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (London: Macmillan, 1920) 6-12ff; cf. D. Minns, "Irenaeus", *ET* 120:4 (2009)158;

[903] Slusser, "How Much?", 516

[904] J. Behr, *St Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood, NY; St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997) 1; Slusser, "How Much?", 515; Barnard, *Justin,* 12.

[905] Behr, *Irenaeus,* 1; Slusser, "How Much?", 515; Barnard, *Justin,* 12; D. Minns, *Irenaeus* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994) 33; W. R. Schoedel, "Philosophy and Rhetoric in the Adversus Haereses of Irenaeus", *Vigiliae Christianae* 13:1 (1959) 22;

[906] E. Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001) 8, 15-17, 29; Timothy, *Apologists and Philosophy,* 35

[907] Osborn, *Irenaeus,* 16, 33

[908] Schoedel, "Philosophy in Irenaeus", 23

[909] Also see Minns, *Irenaeus,* 33; Minns, "Irenaeus", 162

[910] A. Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: OUP, 2012) 137

It seems likely that contemporaries of Irenaeus were also influenced by Justin and those about him. Melito of Sardis (180s)[911]is likely to have based his *Petition* on Justin's *Apologies* (cf. fr.2);[912] he refers to Christianity as a "race" (fr.1.5.3), he talks about a barbarian philosophy (fr.1.7.20), and he makes reference to the rescript of Hadrian (fr.1.10.39-44). Whilst reserving the highest ontological position for the Father, Melito ascribes most divine activity to the Son, "God from God". It was the Son who appeared in OT theophanies (83.608-12;84.615; fr.15.19-24); it was the Son who gave the Law (85.621; fr.15.25; cf. Tatian); it is the Son who created (9.68-69; 82; 83.605-7; 87.636). The Son is identified as the Nous and Logos of God (fr.15.4). Melito says little about the Spirit, so we do not have a full picture of his triad.

Theophilus of Antioch (180s)[913] is also likely to have known about the apologetic tradition from Justin. Like Justin, he believes that the philosophers had borrowed from the prophets; like Justin, he believes the Logos appeared in OT theophanies; like Justin, he believes the Logos inspired the prophets. Grant notes one allusion to Justin's *First Apology.*[914]Like Athenagoras, Theophilus argues against Platonism that matter cannot be uncreated, as this would deny the sovereignty of God (2.4). God is "unconfined" (2.22) and so could not appear in theophanies; for similar reasons, it is Logos and Spirit who create (1.7). He identifies the Logos as Beginning (1.3; cf. Justin; cf. Tatian). Theophilus describes the emanation of the Logos in Platonic terms. He says that God was originally alone, but the Logos was innate (ἐνδιάθετον) in him as his mind. God formed a plan for creation and then generated the Logos as the firstborn of creation, making him external (προφορικόν; 2.22; cf. Plutarch, *Moralia* 777B; cf. Philo). As with Justin and those about him, the Logos takes on the function of the prophetic Spirit and is called "Spirit of God" and "Power of the Most High" (2.10; cf. Luke 1:35). Theophilus equates Spirit and Sophia (cf. Athenagoras). The Spirit is portrayed as a world soul that nourishes creation "by penetrating it from all sides" (cf. Philo, Gig 27), as compared with "the soul in man" (2.13). He describes a descending hierarchy of immanence with the Spirit surrounding creation and the "hand of God" (i.e. Logos) surrounding the Spirit (1.5); elsewhere, he enumerates this triad (2.15).

The next generation of Christian writers received the baton passed them by the "school of Justin". Tertullian (c.160-c.225)[915] maintains the unity of the Godhead against the challenges from monarchians, like Praxeas, utilising the Logos-theology of earlier apologists. The Son was originally innate within the Father, but was later uttered and thus emanated (Prax.5; cf. Theophilus). The Son is described as a ray from the Sun (Prax 8.1; cf. Athenagoras); Tertullian presents a hierarchical triad, descending from the Father through the Son to the Spirit, whom he compares with sun, ray and point respectively.

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[911] For Greek text and English translation see S. G. Hall, *Melito of Sardis: On Pascha and Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). According to Eusebius, Melito was contemporary with Irenaeus (c.170-80s; HE 4.21); he must have died prior to the letter of Polycrates sent during the episcopate of Victor (189-199).

[912] Hall, *Melito,* 65n5. A Syriac apology, ascribed to Melito, is also heavily influenced by this apologetic tradition, but this work is now regarded as inauthentic (Hall, *Melito,* xvi).

[913] For Greek text and English translation see R. M. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). The third book mentions the death of Marcus Aurelius (March 180; cf. 3.27).

[914]Grant, *Theophilus,* 147; Grant, *Greek Apologists,* 146.καὶ τοῖς εὐφώνως ὑβρίζουσι τὸν θεὸν ἄθλα καὸ τιμὰς τιθέασιν (*To Autolycus* 3.30); ἆθλα δὲ καὶ τιμὰς τιοῖς εὐφώνως ὑβρίζουσι τούτους τίθετε (1 Apol 4.9)

[915] For more on the dependence of Tertullian on the "school of Justin" see: R. Braun, *Tertullien: Contre Marcion* (3 vols.; Paris: Cerf, 1990) 3.284-6; Grant, *Greek Apologists,* 187-8; G. May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo* (London: Continuum, 2004) 145; M. C. Alb, *And Scripture Cannot Be Broken* (Brill, 1999) 129-131;

Thus, whilst maintaining three different *gradus* and *forma* within the unity of the *status* and *substantia* (Prax 2), Tertullian is a subordinationist.

Hippolytus (170-235) is described by Photius as a disciple of Irenaeus[916]and seems to have adopted the theology of the "school of Justin". He makes a category distinction between God and created things, placing the Logos in the former category; the Logos is from God and is of the same substance as God (Ref 10.29). He identifies the Logos as the mind of God (Against Noetus 10), brought forth by an "act of reflection". Nevertheless, Hippolytus argues, against some of his contemporaries (see below) that the Logos is both distinct from and subordinate to God. Whilst enumerating three constituents of the Godhead, Hippolytus sometimes identifies the Spirit with the Word (Against Noetus 16) and says that the Logos inspired the prophets (Against Noetus 12).

These early third century fathers, who were helping shape the emerging orthodoxy, were not taking their theology afresh from the pages of scripture, but they inherited from the "school of Justin" a pre-existing triadology that shaped their thought. So whilst these fathers were for themselves highly critical of pagan philosophy and those who depended on it, they were, indirectly, influenced by Platonic ontology.

Emerging Orthodoxy

And yet, whilst Justin and those about him were influential on the proceeding generations of thinkers, they were not the only voice in their own age. As well as those, like Valentinus and Maricon, who placed themselves outside the church due to their divergent views, there was (to some extent at least) a plurality of voices within the church. The success of triadology within Christianity was encouraged, if not cemented, by the exercise of episcopal authority.

Writing in the mid-160s Justin describes some "of our race, who admit that he is Christ, while holding him to be man of men; with whom I do not agree" (Dial 48). He does not treat these with the same contempt shown to the Marcionites or Valentinians; in describing them as being "of our race", he is identifying them as Christian. Justin says he would not agree with these fellow Christians even if they were in the majority, which may imply that they were not. It is not clear whether "man of men" implies that these Christians denied just the deity of Christ or all divine aspects, including the virgin birth. They have sometimes been identified with the Ebionites, though the latter seem to have held to some sort of Spirit Christology.[917] Whatever the case, Justin does not treat them as heretics, but as fellow Christians.

Three decades later, Theodotus of Byzantium was excommunicated by Victor, bishop of Rome (189-199), for declaring that Christ was "merely human". The followers of Theodotus later founded their own church in Rome (HE 5.28). Theodotus, whilst denying the deity of Christ, did not deny the virgin birth (Hippolytus, Ref 7.23; Ps-Tertullian, Haer 7.2); Hippolytus claims that some of his followers believed Christ

[916]*Bibliotheca* 121; cf. Briggman, *Irenaeus*, 145; also see J. C. Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity* (Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 327

[917] Goulder has labeled them "possessionists", which he identifies as the view that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus (at his baptism) and possessed him as the Son of God (cf. Hermas, *Sim* 5.2.1-11; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.26.2; cf. Epiphanius, *Adv. Haer.* 30.13). Goulder, *Two Missions*, 107-134; cf. M. Goulder, "The Pre-Marcan Gospel", *SJT* 47:4 (1994) 456-7; M. Goulder, "A Poor Man's Christology", *NTS* 45:3 (1999);

"became God" after his resurrection. Unlike the Ebionites, Theodotus explicitly rejects Spirit Christology (fr4 = Epiphanius, Pan 54.3.5).[918] Yet the views of Theodotus and his followers were no longer acceptable within the church at Rome. The followers of Theodotus claimed that their doctrine had been preserved from the time of the apostles until the episcopate of Victor (HE 5.28), which, given the testimony of Justin, may have some basis in fact. Given that Victor was prepared to excommunicate all Asian churches over the date of Easter (HE 5.24), it is conceivable that the desire for unanimity over the deity of Christ extended beyond Rome to all churches over which Victor had influence.

Victor's successor, Zephyrinus, was so determinately against any denial of the deity of Christ that he proclaimed that he acknowledged only one God, and this was the Lord Jesus Christ, but it was the Son, not the Father, who had died (cf. Melito). Zephyrinus rejected Hippolytus' calls for a more nuanced approach that recognised the distinction between God and the Logos; so frustrated was Hippolytus with Zephyrinus, and with his successor Callistus, that ultimately he withdrew from the church and became a rival bishop. The irony is that Hippolytus' views were closer to those of Justin than were Zephyrinus', but it is Hippolytus who now found himself uncomfortable within the church at Rome.[919]The emerging orthodoxy, now backed by episcopal authority, declared God as one and as three. Though it would be shaped and refined for centuries to come, triadology had now taken up a central position in Christian doctrine.

[918] See Gaston, "Theodotus".

[919]Hübner presents the thesis that it was a form of monarchianism, first proposed by Noetus around 160 in reaction to Gnosticism, that was adopted by his brother Victor and embraced by Zephyrinus and Callistus. This monarchianism was spread from Rome to Gaul (via Irenaeus), Africa, Arabia and Libya, and went without serious challenge until Tertullian and Hippolytus. See R. M. Hübner, *Der paradox Eine: Antignostischer Monarchianismus im zweiten Jahrhundert* (ed. M. Vinzent; *Vigiliae Christianae* supp 50; Leiden: Brill, 1999). This thesis depends on the reconstruction of the works of Noetus and so necessarily extends beyond the available evidence. It also seems to under represent subordinationism in the second century.

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