

# Hierarchy, Prophecy, and the Angelomorphic Spirit: A Contribution to the Study of the Book of Revelation's *Wirkungsgeschichte*

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Thanks to the work of scholars such as Ulrich Luz and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Wirkungsgeschichte* (usually rendered into English as “reception history”) has come to be regarded as a necessary part of biblical scholarship.<sup>1</sup> Recent years have seen the publication of a volume on Revelation in the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture series, as well as of a book, authored by Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, on the reception of Revelation in Christian tradition.<sup>2</sup>

In what follows, I propose an interpretation of several passages in Revelation that deal with *πνεῦμα* and prophecy. I explore the possible fusion of horizons between the views expressed in the book of Revelation at the end of the first cen-

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<sup>1</sup>Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989–); idem, *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence, and Effects* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); idem, “The Contribution of Reception History to a Theology of the New Testament,” in *The Nature of New Testament Theology: Essays in Honour of Robert Morgan* (ed. Christopher Rowland and Christopher Tuckett; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 123–35; Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005). Aside from Allison’s studies of specific Matthean passages, see the programmatic essay in that volume entitled “Reading Matthew through the Church Fathers” (pp. 117–31).

<sup>2</sup>William C. Weinrich, ed., *Revelation* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament 12; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005); Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004).

tury, the views of certain second-century writers, in particular Clement of Alexandria, and, to a certain degree, the views of today's scholars on Revelation. The witness of Clement is extremely valuable because he is very self-conscious in committing to writing certain oral traditions inherited from earlier authoritative, even charismatic, teachers, whom he refers to as "the elders." This is especially true of the surviving portions of his *Hypotyposeis*—the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, *Eclogae propheticae* and the *Adumbrationes*.<sup>3</sup> It is generally admitted that in these works the voice of the elders is heard more often and more clearly than in other Clementine writings.<sup>4</sup>

I argue that Revelation exemplifies an archaic "angelomorphic" pneumatology similar to the one discernible in other early Christian writings, one that occurs in tandem with Spirit christology, within a theological framework still marked by binitarianism.<sup>5</sup> I will clarify my use of "Spirit christology" and "binitarianism" at a

<sup>3</sup> Clement of Alexandria's work known as the *Hypotyposeis* did not survive as such. Aside from the passages preserved by later patristic writers, scholars count as among surviving portions of the *Hypotyposeis* the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* and the *Eclogae propheticae*, together with the *Adumbrationes*. This was argued in the nineteenth century by Christian K. J. von Bunsen, *Analecta Antenicena* (orig. ed. London, 1854; repr., Aalen: Scientia, 1968), 1:159, 163–65. Definitive proof came with Pierre Nautin's study "La fin des *Stromates* et les *Hypotyposeis* de Clément d'Alexandrie," *VC* 30 (1976): 268–302. The thesis has also been adopted by Alain le Boulluec, the editor of Clement for Sources chrétiennes. See le Boulluec, "Extraits d'oeuvres de Clément d'Alexandrie: La transmission et le sens de leur titres," in *Titres et articulations du texte dans les oeuvres antiques: Actes du colloque international de Chantilly 13–15 décembre 1994* (ed. Jean-Claude Fredouille et al.; Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 287–300, esp. 289, 292, 296, 300; idem, "Pour qui, pourquoi, comment? Les 'Stromates' de Clément d'Alexandrie," in *Entrer en matière: Les prologues* (ed. Jean-Daniel Dubois and Bernard Roussel; Paris: Cerf, 1998), 23–36, esp. 24 n. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Collomp, "Une source de Clément d'Alexandrie et des Homélie Pseudo-Clémentines," *RevPhil* 37 (1913): 19–46; Wilhelm Bousset, *Jüdisch-christlicher Schulbetrieb in Alexandria und Rom: Literarische Untersuchungen zu Philo und Clemens von Alexandria, Justin und Irenäus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915), 248–64; Georg Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie* (BHT 21; Tübingen: Mohr, 1956), 68 and n. 3; Jean Daniélou, "Les traditions secrètes des Apôtres," *Erjb* 31 (1962): 199–215, here 214; Christian Oeyen, "Eine frühchristliche Engelpneumatologie bei Klemens von Alexandrien," *IKZ* 55 (1965): 102–20; 56 (1966): 27–47; Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch: Studien zur frühchristlichen Pneumatologie* (BEvT 63; Munich: Kaiser, 1972), 79 and n. 10; Henning Ziebritzki, *Heiliger Geist und Weltseele: Das Problem der dritten Hypostase bei Origenes, Plotin und ihren Vorläufern* (BHT 84; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 121.

<sup>5</sup> Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (AGJU 42; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 6: "Ignorance concerning the influence of angelomorphic traditions has also plagued scholarship on early Pneumatology . . . the same or similar angelomorphic traditions also influenced teaching about the Holy Spirit." See also the dense but necessarily brief survey of early Jewish and Christian examples of angelomorphic pneumatology in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 114–19. For angelomorphic pneumatology in early Christianity, see Oeyen, "Eine frühchristliche Engelpneumatologie"; Bogdan G. Bucur, "The Son of God and the Angelomorphic Holy Spirit: A Rereading of the *Shepherd's* Christology," *ZNW* 98 (2007): 121–43;

later point. As for “angelomorphic,” this term, coined by Jean Daniélou, is now widely used by scholars writing on the emergence of christology.<sup>6</sup> I follow Crispin Fletcher-Louis’s definition and use it “wherever there are signs that an individual or community possesses specifically angelic characteristics or status, though for whom identity cannot be reduced to that of an angel.”<sup>7</sup> The virtue of this definition is that it signals the use of angelic *characteristics* in descriptions of God or humans, while not necessarily implying that the latter are angels *stricto sensu*.

## I. EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMENTARIES ON REVELATION

The earliest surviving commentaries on Revelation is that of Victorinus of Poetovio, composed around 258–260.<sup>8</sup> The works by Melito and Hippolytus did not survive; a few scholia are ascribed to Origen.<sup>9</sup> There is, however, much that can be learned about the exegesis of Revelation prior to Hippolytus and Origen. It is certain, for instance, that a passage in the scholia ascribed to Origen finds an exact match in *Strom.* 4.25.156.<sup>10</sup>

It appears that Clement of Alexandria’s notes on Revelation (as well as on the *Apocalypse of Peter*) were part of the eighth book of the *Hypotyposesis*.<sup>11</sup> It is not

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idem, “Revisiting Christian Oeyen: ‘The Other Clement’ on Father, Son, and the Angelomorphic Spirit,” *VC* 61 (2007): 381–413.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (French ed. 1958; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), 146; Richard Longenecker, “Some Distinctive Early Christological Motifs,” *NTS* 14 (1968): 529–33; Robert Gundry, “Angelomorphic Christology in Revelation,” *SBLSP* 33 (1994): 662–78; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2/70; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); Peter R. Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (SNTSMS 95; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (WUNT 2/94; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*; Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity* (WUNT 2/109; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 14–15; similarly Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 4, 349.

<sup>8</sup> Martine Dulaey, ed. and trans, *Victorin de Poetovio: Sur L’Apocalypse et autres écrits* (SC 423; Paris: Cerf, 1997), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Constantine I. Dyobouniotes and Adolf von Harnack, *Der Scholien-Kommentar des Origenes zur Apokalypse Johannis* (TU 38.3; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), 21–44; C. H. Turner, “The Text of the Newly Discovered Scholia of Origen on the Apocalypse,” *JTS* 13 (1912): 386–97; idem, “Document: Origen, Scholia in Apocalypsin,” *JTS* 25 (1924): 1–15. Origen’s scholia have been translated into French by Solange Bouquet and published in the volume *L’Apocalypse expliquée par Césaire d’Arles: Scholies attribuées à Origène* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1989), 167–203.

<sup>10</sup> The text of Scholion 5 (Dyobouniotes and von Harnack, *Scholien-Kommentar des Origenes*, 22) is identical to that of *Strom.* 4.25.156.

<sup>11</sup> Von Bunsen, *Analecta Antenicena*, 1:164; Theodor Zahn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des*

clear whether Cassiodorus, who commissioned a Latin translation of this work, possessed only excerpts of the *Hypotyposeis* dealing with some of the catholic epistles (since he only mentions Clement's commentaries on these NT writings), or whether he not only took care to "purge" the *Hypotyposeis* of "offensive" ideas, as he does admit, but also thought it best to leave out certain passages, such as, for instance, the scholia on Revelation.<sup>12</sup> In any case, the *Adumbrationes* consist only of scholia to 1 Peter, 1–2 John, and Jude.

We are fortunate, however, to possess Cassiodorus's commentary on Revelation, contained in his *Complexiones*. To the degree that passages in Cassiodorus's commentary reflect the theology present in the *Adumbrationes*, the commentary may represent views that go back to Clement and the "elders."

## II. THE "SEVEN SPIRITS" OF REVELATION AND THE SECOND-CENTURY ΠΡΩΤΟΧΡΙΣΤΟΙ

Revelation refers several times to a mysterious group of "seven spirits" (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). The first of these occurrences is also the most important one, because it places the seven spirits in the initial greeting: "grace and peace" are said to come from God, and from the seven spirits, and from Jesus Christ.

The structure of the phrase (καὶ . . . καὶ . . . καὶ) suggests that "the seven spirits before his [God's] throne" are one among three coordinated entities. The blessing with "grace and peace" is suggestive of a divine origin.<sup>13</sup> The three must, then, in some way stand for the divinity (cf. 2 Cor 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all").<sup>14</sup> This is why it seems most likely that the mention of the "seven spirits" corresponds to the expected reference to the Holy Spirit. In other words, the author's expression "seven spirits" would designate what the early church more often referred to as "Holy Spirit."

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*neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur*, vol. 3, *Supplementum Clementinum* (Erlangen: Andreas Deichert, 1884), 156.

<sup>12</sup> According to Zahn (*Supplementum Clementinum*, 136–37, 153), Cassiodorus was aware of the fact that Clement had commented on the OT and NT (e.g., *Inst. Div. litt.*, Praef.), but he possessed only Clement's notes on the catholic epistles.

<sup>13</sup> Pace Joseph Michl, *Die Engelvorstellungen in der Apokalypse des hl. Johannes* (Munich: Max Hueber, 1937), 155–56. Michl tries to escape the difficulty by interpreting the blessing with "grace and peace" coming from the angels as "eine Spendung im uneigentlichen Sinne" (p. 156). On the other hand, he adduces a number of Jewish and Christian texts in which angels appear to hold a certain exalted status in their relations with humans. The difficulty of Rev 1:4, however, is due to the fact that angels appear to be placed on the same level as the Father and the Son.

<sup>14</sup> See also the list of passages illustrating Paul's "soteriological trinitarianism" in Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 839–42.

According to Edmondo F. Lupieri, Revelation's use of a "Satanic triad" composed of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (16:13; cf. ch. 13) suggests the existence of a similar triadic structure in the opposite, divine world.<sup>15</sup> In the cautious words of Lupieri, with the greeting in Revelation "John is developing some kind of (pre-)Trinitarian thinking."<sup>16</sup> Whether one chooses to term it a "grotesque" Trinity or one that is "quite orthodox" depends on whether one considers this theology in its proper context, which is that of Jewish apocalyptic traditions appropriated by early Christians.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, the angelic traits of the seven spirits are quite obvious. In fact, Revelation also mentions "the seven stars" held by the Son of Man, which are said to represent "the seven angels" (1:20), and "the seven angels before the throne" (8:2). Pierre Prigent argues that the seven spirits are different from the seven stars, because they are mentioned separately in Rev 3:1 ("he who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars . . .").<sup>18</sup> However, since both "stars/ angels" and "spirits" are well-defined groups (*the seven stars, the seven angels, the seven spirits*), the simplest solution is to admit that we have here symbolic references to the same reality, which the author conveyed by recourse to the language of angelic worship before the divine throne.<sup>19</sup> The seven are placed before the divine throne, clearly subordinated to Christ (seven eyes of the Lord, seven stars in his hand, seven horns of the Lamb), ever contemplating the divine Face, offering up the prayers mounting from below and passing on the illumination that descends from above. These are standard elements in the depiction of angelic intercession, contemplation, and service.

To make sense of all of the above, patristic as well as modern-day commentators have outlined the following alternatives: (a) Revelation connects the seven spirits/eyes/lamps of the Lord (Zech 3:9; 4:10) with the rest/tabernacling of the seven spiritual gifts (Isa 11:2; Prov 8:12–16); (b) Revelation connects the seven spirits/eyes/lamps of the Lord (Zech 3:9; 4:10) with the seven angels of the presence (Tob 12:15; *1 En.* 90:20–21). The latter is a minority position, although it has notable defenders.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Edmondo F. Lupieri, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of John* (Italian Texts and Studies on Religion and Society; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 103.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>17</sup> These are the terms used by R. H. Charles (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* [2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920], 1:xii; cf. 1:12) and Gregory Dix ("The Seven Archangels and the Seven Spirits: A Study in the Origin, Development, and Messianic Associations of the Two Themes," *JTS* 28 [1927]: 248).

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 117.

<sup>19</sup> Lupieri, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 102–3, 136; David E. Aune, *Revelation* (3 vols.; WBC 52A–C; Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 1:33.

<sup>20</sup> Charles, *Revelation*, 1:11; Michl, *Engelvorstellungen*; Aune, *Revelation* 1:33–35; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 264–65; Gottfried Schimanowski, *Die himmlische Liturgie in der Apokalypse des Johannes* (WUNT 2/154; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 118. Among patristic writers, this explanation is implied by Cyprian (*Exhortation to Martyrdom, to Fortunatus* 11) and

The exegetical impasse is evident. Patristic authors from the fifth century onward are overcautious, trying to avoid any interpretations that would fall short of doctrinal orthodoxy.<sup>21</sup> Many modern exegetes tend to juxtapose the two solutions, rarely daring to eliminate either possibility.<sup>22</sup> Both solutions have significant strengths and weaknesses: the first one accounts for the number seven and the position in the greeting; the second accounts for the undeniable angelic traits of these seven spirits. However, neither is able to integrate the advantages of the alternative interpretation, and so both are still open to criticism.<sup>23</sup>

Could the theology of second-century writers shed some light on this matter? Even though we possess no direct reference to Rev 1:4 (and related verses), several passages in Clement suggest that the Alexandrian did hold a specific view about the passages in Revelation dealing with the seven spirits.

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favored by Oecumenius and Arethas, echoing statements by Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria (see the discussion below).

<sup>21</sup> I rely on the fragments from patristic commentaries provided in Albin Škrinjar, "Les sept esprits: Apoc. 1, 4; 3, 1; 4, 5; 5, 6," *Bib* 16 (1935): 2–24; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indices* (3rd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1909), 5–6; Michl, *Engelvorstellungen*, 113–34. Andrew of Caesarea and Arethas present both alternatives and note the tentative character of the angelic solution ("one could consider the spirits as angels"). Oecumenius and Andrew of Caesarea agree that the expression "before the throne" in 1:4 suggests inferiority in status, and therefore should not be interpreted as a reference to God; nevertheless, Oecumenius interprets 5:6 as a reference to the seven gifts of the Spirit. Andrew of Caesarea states that the expression "who is, and was, and is to come" refers to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; thus, he manages to find *both* the Trinity *and* the angels in 1:4. Karl Schlütz (*Isaias 11:2 [Die sieben Gaben des Heiligen Geistes] in den ersten vier christlichen Jahrhunderten* [Münster: Aschendorff, 1932], 34) has shown that a connection between Isa 11:2 (the seven gifts of the Spirit) and Zech 4:10 (the seven lamps) was an established topos in patristic exegesis.

<sup>22</sup> Eduard R. Schweizer (*Spirit of God* [Bible Key Words 9; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960], 105–6) simply juxtaposes the religio-historical perspective ("from the point of view of the history of religion, they are simply the seven archangels"), and the traditional theological point of view, according to which the seven spirits "represent the Spirit of God in its fullness and completeness." Aune (*Revelation*, 1:34) is exhaustive in his references but very reserved in advocating the identification between the seven spirits and the principal angels.

<sup>23</sup> Equating the seven spirits with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit of Isa 11:2 does not explain the resulting "double blessing" (why is the Holy Spirit dispensing grace and peace if he is *already* designated by his *gifts*?), or the awkward conflation of personal traits (being in service before the throne, blessing the church), and impersonal traits (the Spirit as spiritual gifts), or the facts that, despite being "seven" and "before the throne," the seven spirits and the seven angels are not the same. Moreover, critics point out that the overwhelming majority of greetings in apostolic epistles mention "grace and peace" from the Father and the Son (Michl, *Engelvorstellungen*, 151; for a list of greetings in the NT, see Aune, *Revelation*, 1:26–27), and that a trinitarian interpretation of the greeting in Revelation is derived from "later conceptualization of God" (Aune, *Revelation*, 1:34). On the other hand, we have 2 Cor 13:14 ("The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you") and the trinitarian baptismal formula, both of which suggest that a reference to the Holy Spirit would have been the likely intention of Rev 1:4.

In some of his texts (e.g., *Excerpta* 10–11; 27; *Eclogae* 51–52; 56) Clement furnishes a detailed description of the hierarchical structure of the spiritual universe. This celestial “hierarchy,” if the anachronism is acceptable, features, in descending order, the Face, the seven first created angels, the archangels, finally the angels.<sup>24</sup> The orienting principle (ἄρχή) of the hierarchy is the “Face of God,” which Clement, like other early Christian writers, identifies as the Logos, the Son (*Excerpta* 10.6; 12.1; *Paed.* 1.57; 1.124.4; *Strom.* 7.58; Tertullian, *Adv. Prax.* 14). The first level of celestial entities contemplating the Face consists of the seven πρῶτόκτιστοι, celestial beings “first created.” These *prototists* are numbered with the angels and archangels, who are their subordinates; on the other hand, they are bearers of the Name and, as such, are called “gods” (*Adumbrationes in 1 Jn* 2:1; *In Juda* 5:24). Clement equates the seven *prototists* with “the seven eyes of the Lord” (Zech 3:9; 4:10; Rev 5:6), the “thrones” (Col 1:16), and the “angels ever contemplating the Face of God” (Matt 18:10) (*Strom.* 5.6.35; *Eclogae* 57.1; *Excerpta* 10). The *prototists* are seven, but they are simultaneously characterized by unity and multiplicity; “their liturgy,” says Clement, “is common and undivided” (*Excerpta* 10.3; 11.4). In relation to Christ, they present the prayers ascending from below; on the other hand, they function as “high priests” of the archangels, just as the archangels are “high priests” of the angels, and so forth (*Excerpta* 27.2).

Here we find a definite echo of biblical and pseudepigraphic traditions about the highest angelic company (Ezek 9:2–3; Tob 12:15; *1 En.* 20; 90:21),<sup>25</sup> which will also surface in later rabbinic writings.<sup>26</sup> Among the Christian texts available to

<sup>24</sup> The term “hierarchy” was coined centuries later by the anonymous author of the Pseudo-Areopagitic corpus. Nevertheless, the multistoried cosmos that characterizes apocalyptic writings such as the *Ascension of Isaiah*, *2 Enoch*, or the *Epistula Apostolorum* can also be labeled “hierarchical.” Moreover, there are some surprising similarities between the Clementinian and Dionysian “hierarchies.” See in this respect Bousset, *Jüdisch-christlicher Schulbetrieb*, 179 n. 1; Utto Riedinger, “Eine Paraphrase des Engel-Traktates von Klemens von Alexandria in den Erotapokriseis des Pseudo-Kaisarios?” *ZKG* 73 (1962): 253–71, esp. 262; Alexander Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Analekta Vlatadon 59; Thessalonica: Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, 1994), 265.

<sup>25</sup> In the *Prayer of Joseph* Israel ranks higher than the seven archangels, as chief captain and first minister before the face of God. In *Jubilees*, the angels of the presence are “first created” (*Jub.* 2:2; 15:27). Other relevant passages are *T. Levi* 3:5; 4:2; *T. Judah* 25:2; 1QH 6:13. See also James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 87–89, 126–27; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 124–51; Dix, “Seven Archangels.”

<sup>26</sup> According to *3 En.* 10:2–6, Metatron is exalted above the “eight great princes” who bear the divine Name. *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer*, a work composed around 750 c.e. but incorporating material going back to the Pseudepigrapha, speaks about “the seven angels which were created first,” who are said to minister before God within the Pargod (*The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great According to the Text of the Manuscript Belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna* [trans. Gerald Friedländer; New York: Hermon 1965], iv, 23).

Clement, the *Shepherd of Hermas* knows of a group of seven consisting of the six “first created ones” (πρῶτοι κτισθέντες) who accompany the Son of God as their seventh (*Vis.* 3.4.1; *Sim.* 5.5.3). There can be no question, however, that Revelation offered an even more explicit source mentioning the seven spirits before the divine throne.

Is it possible to connect Clement’s statements on the seven *protocists* with the seven spirits of Revelation? I think we can answer in the affirmative. The following elements are certain: (a) Ancient and modern exegetes agree that Rev 1:4 is intended as a reference to the seven spirits/eyes/lamps of the Lord in Zech 3:9; 4:10. Clement also connects his *protocists* with Zech 3:9 and Isa 11:2–3 (LXX) (*Excerpta* 10; *Eclogae* 57.1; *Strom.* 5.6.35). (b) Arethas (ca. 860–940), who is writing on Revelation on the basis of earlier commentaries (Andrew of Crete, 660–740; Oecumenius, ca. 550–600), affirms that both Irenaeus and Clement saw in Rev 1:4 a reference to the seven angels, and Arethas regards this explanation as the more probable.<sup>27</sup> These two elements could, in theory, mean that Clement is drawing on several biblical passages from the Old and New Testaments, but not on Revelation, and that Arethas simply does not know what he is talking about.<sup>28</sup> But the reference to Irenaeus finds a counterpart in the *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*.<sup>29</sup> Irenaeus’s tenuous connection between the seven heavens and the seven spirits is echoed with greater clarity in Victorinus’s treatise *De Fabrica Mundi* 7–8, where “the seven heavens” correspond to “the seven spirits,” and, among many other things, to “the seven angels.”<sup>30</sup> Arethas’s information on Clement is even more

<sup>27</sup> Michl (*Engelvorstellungen*, 113–14) argues that Arethas tells us only that Irenaeus and Clement *knew* of a group of seven principal angels, without connecting this theological opinion with the exegesis of Revelation. However, by mentioning this opinion to explain the seven-angel interpretation of Rev 1:4, Arethas is at least saying that they *would have* read the passage in this way and derived their teaching from it. To impose upon patristic writers a separation between exegetical and theological options does violence to their thinking.

<sup>28</sup> This is the interpretation of Škrinjar, “Les sept esprits,” 4–6, 14, 21.

<sup>29</sup> *Dem.* 9 (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching* [trans. John Behr; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997], 45–46): “But this world is encompassed by seven heavens, in which dwell <innumerable> powers and angels and archangels. . . . Thus the Spirit of God is <active [in] manifold [ways]> and seven forms of service were counted by Isaias the prophet resting upon the Son of God . . . for he says, ‘The Spirit shall rest upon him’ . . . [quotation from Isa 11:2–3]. Hence, the first heaven . . . is that of wisdom; and the second, after it, [that] <of> understanding. . . .” Irenaeus continues to list all seven “spirits” and concludes with the following: “From this pattern Moses received the seven-branched candlestick, since he received the service as a pattern of heaven.”

<sup>30</sup> “To those days [the seven days of creation] correspond also seven spirits. . . . Their names are those spirits that rested upon the Christ of God, as is given assurance in the prophet Isaiah. . . . Therefore, the highest heaven [is that] of wisdom, the second [is that] of understanding. . . . Behold! the seven horns of the lamb, seven eyes of God, seven spirits, . . . seven golden lamps, . . . seven angels, . . . seven weeks completed in Pentecost, . . . the lamp with seven orifices, the seven columns in the house of Solomon . . .” (translation mine, on the basis of the Latin text in SC 423, 145–46).



certainly deduced from actual Clementine texts. Given Clement's familiarity with the idea that "the whole world of creatures . . . revolves in sevens" and that "the first-born princes of the angels (πρωτόγονοι ἀγγέλων ἄρχοντες), who have the greatest power, are seven" (*Strom.* 6.16.142–43), and given that he goes so far, as I have noted above, as to interpret the "angels of the little ones" in Matt 18:10 as a proof text for the seven *protocists*, it would be quite awkward for him to neglect the explicit groups of seven spirits and angels in Revelation. Finally, a passage from the scholia on Ps.-Dionysius by John of Scythopolis links the seven supreme angels of Revelation and those of Clement's *Hypotyposeis*.<sup>31</sup>

Cassiodorus's commentary on Revelation seems indebted to the *Adumbrationes* on precisely the point under discussion: the blessing "from the seven spirits" (Rev 1:4) is said to come from the seven archangels mentioned in Tob 12:15.<sup>32</sup> We may therefore be reasonably certain that this was Clement's interpretation of the seven spirits in Revelation. Moreover, given what has been said earlier about the indebtedness of the *Hypotyposeis* to earlier Christian teachers, this was most likely the prevalent interpretation of the seven angels in the second century.

### III. SEVEN ANGELS OR ANGELOMORPHIC PNEUMATOLOGY?

I noted that the angelic traits of the seven spirits in Rev 1:4 are undeniable. It appears that Revelation illustrates the same use of πνεῦμα terminology to designate angelic beings that scholars have shown to be widespread in the Hebrew Bible, in the LXX and various authors of the Alexandrian Diaspora, in the Qumran writings, as well as in early Christianity.<sup>33</sup> In the OT, the *locus classicus* is Isa 63:9–10. Here the agent of the exodus is referred to neither as "angel" nor as "pillar of cloud," but as "holy spirit." In the NT, aside from the designation of *evil* angels as (impure) "spirits," the equivalence of "spirit" and "angel" is implicit in Heb 12:9 ("Father of spirits") and Acts 8:26, 29, 39, where Philip's guide is successively described as "angel of the Lord," "spirit," and "spirit of the Lord." In Revelation, πνεῦμα is used twice for evil angels (16:13–14; 18:2). But as the chart on the next page shows, πνεῦμα can also designate a good angel:

<sup>31</sup> Λέγει δὲ πρεσβυτέρους ἀγγέλους ὁ θεῖος Ἰωάννης ἐν τῇ Ἀποκαλύψει, καὶ ἐπὶ εἶναι τοὺς πρῶτους ἐν τῷ Τωβία ἀνέγνωμεν καὶ παρὰ Κλήμεντι βιβλίῳ ἐ' τῶν Ὑποτυπώσεων (PG 4:225, 228).

<sup>32</sup> . . . a septem angelis qui . . . sicut in libro Tobiae Rafael angelus dixit, unus sum ex septem angelis . . . (Complexiones 2 [113]); ante quem erant septem spiritus, id est angeli dei (Complexiones 8 [117]). Text in Roger Gryson, ed., *Variorum auctorum commentaria minora in Apocalypsin Johannis* (CCSL 107; Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 113–29. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in this volume.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur E. Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruach at Qumran* (SBLDS 110; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 145–71; John R. Levison, "The Angelic Spirit in Early Judaism," *SBLSP* 34 (1995): 464–93; Bucur, "Rereading of the *Shepherd's* Christology"

Revelation 14:13	Revelation 19:9
<p>And I heard <u>a voice from heaven</u> <u>saying</u>,  “Write this:  <i>Blessed are</i>  <i>the dead who from now on die</i>  <i>in the Lord!</i>”  “<u>Yes,</u> <u>says the Spirit</u>  [the initial locutor, the voice],  “they will rest from their labors, for  their deeds follow them.”</p>	<p>And <u>the angel</u> <u>said</u> to me,  “Write this:  <i>Blessed are</i>  <i>those invited to the marriage supper</i>  <i>of the Lamb!</i>”  And <u>said he</u> to me  [the initial locutor, the angel]  “These are true words of God!”</p>

Both passages are examples of the so-called promise-to-the-victor, a type of statement that occurs fairly often in Revelation. In both passages, an initial declaration is repeated and confirmed by the same heavenly locutor. The difference consists only in the fact that we read “spirit” in 14:13, and, respectively, “angel” in 19:9. Yet in light of the similarities of structure and content, and given the interchangeability of the terms “angel” and “spirit” in early Jewish and Christian texts, I judge this to be another example of  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$  terminology in the service of angelology.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, as I have argued, the pneumatological content of Rev 1:4 is equally undeniable. Lupieri finds additional support for this view by pointing to the dualism between the sevenfold Spirit and the sevenfold demonic power (Rev 12:3; 13:1).<sup>35</sup>

Just as for Clement, who on the one hand equates the seven *protocists* with the “thrones” of Col 1:16 and “the angels of the little ones” of Matt 18:10 but on the other hand refers to them as “heptad of the Spirit” (*Paed.* 3.12.87), the seven angelic spirits of Revelation occupy an area of confluence between angelology and pneumatology. These two realities—angelic imagery and pneumatological content—need not be viewed as mutually exclusive. They can be fused by appealing to a new descriptive category: “angelomorphic pneumatology.” Here I follow the convention of using the term “angelomorphic” to denote the angelic *characteristics* of an individual or community, whereas the latter’s *identity* cannot be reduced to that of an angel or angels.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> So also Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 266–68.

<sup>35</sup> Lupieri, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 136: “We are to understand that whenever the Spirit comes forth in human history . . . it must be sevenfold, in contrast to the Satanic dominion. That this dominion is in fact sevenfold is shown by the fact that the various demonic beasts always have seven heads, which in its turn probably reflects Satan’s dominion over the seven periods into which the duration of this world seems to be divided. . . . The sevenfold pattern of the Spirit’s interventions thus probably indicates the constant presence of the Spirit throughout the duration of human history.”

<sup>36</sup> Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 14–15; similarly Daniélou, *Jewish Christianity*, 118. See also

#### IV. BINITARIANISM AND SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY IN REVELATION

A definition of the operating concepts is in order at this juncture. For the purpose of this essay, “Spirit christology” refers to the use of *πνεῦμα* terminology to designate Christ in numerous pre-Nicene texts and authors.<sup>37</sup> The term “binitarianism” points to a bifurcation of the divinity, which, however, maintains the monotheistic framework.<sup>38</sup>

It is my contention that despite what seems to be a trinitarian opening (Rev 1:4–5), Revelation remains determined by a binitarian framework, concerned to present the divinity as a binitarian reality: God and his Son. On this second point, second-century writings can again provide some insight into the theology of Revelation. It is generally accepted that on the way from the use of trinitarian formulas to a mature trinitarian theology, these formulas coexisted with a certain binitarian orientation.<sup>39</sup> Such early Christian binitarianism is often the result of an unclear or even nonexistent distinction between the Son and the Spirit; in other words, binitarianism and Spirit christology are two aspects of the same phenomenon.<sup>40</sup>

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the remark of Lupieri: “perhaps the fact that there are seven spirits is the result of John’s reflection on the angelic nature of the Spirit” (*Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 103 [emphasis added]).

<sup>37</sup> For a rich survey of texts, see Manlio Simonetti, “Note di cristologia pneumatica,” *Aug 12* (1972): 201–32, esp. 230–31.

<sup>38</sup> The Jewish traditions investigated by Alan F. Segal (*Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* [SJLA 25; Leiden: Brill, 1977]) are examples of binitarianism; see also Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Divinations; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 112–27. One may find such “binitarian” elements echoed in the religious philosophies of Philo and Numenius. Binitarianism is not dualism: “neither the apocalyptic, mystical, nor Christianized Judaism affirmed two separate deities. They understood themselves to be monotheistic. . . . Only radical gnosticism posited two different and opposing deities” (Segal, “Dualism in Judaism, Christianity and Gnosticism: A Definitive Issue,” in idem, *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity* [BJS 127; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 13).

<sup>39</sup> See, in this respect, Friedrich Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus* (TU 46; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1930), 114–205; H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study in the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church* (Bampton Lectures 1954; London: Mowbray, 1954), 133–36; Raniero Cantalamessa, *Lomelia in S. Pascha dello Pseudo-Ippolito di Roma: Ricerche sulla teologia dell’Asia Minore nella seconda metà del II secolo* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1967), 171–85; Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (3rd ed., rev.; Structure and Growth of Philosophic Systems from Plato to Spinoza 3; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 177–256; Salvatore Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 26, 53; Simonetti, “Note”; Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 155–56.

<sup>40</sup> Kretschmar, *Trinitätstheologie*, 115–16; Waldemar Macholz, *Spuren binitarischer Denkweise im Abendlande seit Tertullian* (Diss., Halle 1902; Jena: Kämpfe, 1902); Loofs, *Theophilus*,

Who is “God” in the Book of Revelation? The specific indicators are abundantly present in the text: the divine name, the divine throne, the fact of receiving worship. All three indicators point to the same theological view: God and, associated with God, the Son or Lamb. The bearer of the divine name is the Father (1:4, 8; 4:8, 11, 17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22).<sup>41</sup> Yet as Gieschen has shown extensively, Revelation also attributes the divine name to the Son.<sup>42</sup> This is especially noteworthy in 1:8 (“‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty”).<sup>43</sup> The divine throne is occupied jointly by the Father and the Lamb (5:6), and the Lamb is associated in various ways with the worship received by God.<sup>44</sup> There is no indication of a third enthroned entity being associated with the Father and the Son as bearer of the name or as recipient of worship. Within this binitarian framework, the Spirit appears at the same time indis-

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114–205; Joseph Barbel, *Christos Angelos: Die Anschauung von Christus als Bote und Engel in der gelehrten und volkstümlichen Literatur des christlichen Altertums: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Ursprungs und der Fortdauer des Arianismus* (1941; Fotomechanischer Nachdruck mit einem Anhang; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1964), 188–92.

<sup>41</sup> The fact that “He-Who-Is” functions as a stand-in for  $\Upsilon\text{H}\omega\text{H}$  explains why the writer refuses to subject the name to the rules of declension in Rev 1:4. According to Prigent (*Commentary*, 15), “it is impossible to suppose that . . . it was not deliberate, especially since the same expression is repeated later (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5) with the same persistence in making a noun out of the imperfect form of the verb ‘to be.’ . . . [T]he titles of the eternal God cannot be subjected to temporal vicissitudes, and consequently to the laws of noun declension. The God in question is one who can only act as subject.”

<sup>42</sup> Gieschen, “The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology,” *VC* 57 (2003): 115–57, esp. 131–34; idem, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 253–55.

<sup>43</sup> Sean McDonough (*YHWH at Patmos: Rev. 1:4 in Its Hellenistic and Early Jewish Setting* [WUNT 2/107; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999], esp. 195–231) has provided erudite proof that “the designations in Rev 1:8 are . . . derived from three variations of the name  $\Upsilon\text{H}\omega\text{H}$ ” (p. 200), namely,  $\text{I}\alpha\delta/\Upsilon\text{H}\omega\text{H}$  Elohim, and  $\Upsilon\text{H}\omega\text{H}$  Sabaoth (p. 218). Aune (*Revelation*, 1:55–59) suggests connections with both Hellenistic revelatory magic and Jewish alphabet symbolism. Martin McNamara found that the passage “is perfectly paralleled in TJI Dt 32, 39 and in this text alone of those available to us. . . . It is not to be excluded that the Apocalypse is directly dependent on TJI Dt 32, 39 in its use of it, although it is possible that both texts are dependent on the same early liturgical tradition” (*The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* [AnBib 27; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966], 112). In any case, whether the author of Revelation draws on Jewish or Greek traditions, or perhaps on a typically Hellenistic fusion of both, he is also subjecting preexisting formulas to his own theological views. His eschatological perspective dictates an original modification of the third member of the *Dreizeitenformel* from “who will be” to “who will come” (so Ben Witherington III, *Revelation* [New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge/ New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 75).

<sup>44</sup> Revelation 5:13–14 (“blessing, honor and glory” are given to God and to the Lamb); 7:10 (God and the Lamb receive the acclamation of the martyrs); 14:4 (God and the Lamb receive the self-offering of the martyrs as “first fruits” of humankind); 20:6 (God and Christ receive priestly service from those who are worthy and reign together with them); 21:22–23; 22:5 (the Lamb is or embodies the divine glory and light).

solubly linked to the worshiped second person (“seven horns of the Lamb,” “seven eyes of the Lord,” “seven stars in the Lord’s hand”), and strictly subordinated to it (“the seven holy spirits before the throne”).

## V. “SPIRIT” IN REVELATION

Revelation never uses the expression “holy spirit.” The instances in which the author uses πνεῦμα can be divided into the following categories: πνεῦμα as “breath” of life (11:11; 13:15); πνεῦμα for evil angels (16:13, 14; 18:2); ἐν πνεύματι as an indicator of the visionary ecstatic state (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10); πνεῦμα at the closing of the seven letters: “listen to what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7); the seven πνεύματα (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6); “the spirit of prophecy” (19:10); “the God of the spirits of the prophets” (22:6); πνεῦμα in association with the heavenly church, “the bride” (22:17).

I have already discussed the case of the seven spirits in Revelation. Of the remaining categories, the following are irrelevant for a discussion about the pneumatology of Revelation: πνεῦμα as life-giving “breath,” πνεῦμα for the “evil angels,” and the expression ἐν πνεύματι to denote an ecstatic state.<sup>45</sup> At this point it is necessary to explore the use of πνεῦμα in the closing section of the seven letters (chs. 2–3). I shall discuss the remaining references in the section on prophecy.

There is a precise parallelism between the function of Christ and that of the “spirit” as described in the introductory and final parts of the seven letters. The letters are framed by an opening announcement of what Christ proclaims (τάδε λέγει ὁ . . . [completed with descriptions of Christ drawn from ch. 1]), and a final exhortation to hear what the Spirit says (τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει). It is clear that the parallelism is intentional and that the author consciously and consistently introduces a functional overlapping between “Christ” and “Spirit.”<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, commen-

<sup>45</sup> I take “breath of life” to mean simply the vital force that characterizes that which is biologically alive, as opposed to dead matter. The designation of evil angelic beings as evil “spirits” implicitly eliminates any reference to the Holy Spirit. For the expression “in the spirit,” see Richard Bauckham, “The Role of the Spirit in the Apocalypse,” *EvQ* 52 (1980): 66–73. The phrase seems to have functioned in early Christian literature as a technical designation of the inspired state of prophets. In such cases (e.g., *Did.* 11.7–9), “the primary reference is . . . not the source of inspiration, but the phenomenon of ecstatic speech” (Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993], 151). In the case of Revelation, Bauckham believes that “γενέσθαι ἐν πνεύματι . . . is probably to be taken as both phenomenological and theological, denoting both the visionary as such and the Spirit’s authorship of it” (p. 152). I agree with Aune, whose dense excursus dedicated to the formula “in the spirit” concludes that “ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι is best rendered as ‘I fell into a trance’” (*Revelation*, 1:83). Prigent holds the same position (*Commentary*, 128).

<sup>46</sup> Revelation 2:1–2:7; 2:8–2:11; 2:12–2:17; 2:18–2:29; 3:1–3:6; 3:7–3:13; 3:14–3:22.

tators sometimes evade the difficulty by restating the obvious, or they resort to convenient dogmatic “shortcuts,” simply bypassing the exegetical trouble zone: “Christ speaks through the Spirit.”<sup>47</sup>

Given the prophetic-visionary character of Revelation 2–3, “spirit” is most likely connected to the reality of prophetic experience (cf. 1 John 4:1–3).<sup>48</sup> From this point on, scholarly opinions begin to diverge. Some take “Spirit” as a christological title, derived from the act of Christ’s inspiring the prophet: “the Spirit is none other than . . . the Ascended Christ in his role of speaking to the Church.”<sup>49</sup> Others hold the opposite position:

it is not that the Spirit is identical to the exalted Lord, but that the exalted Lord speaks to the Churches by . . . the Spirit of prophecy. . . . When the spirit of prophecy comes upon him, John speaks of himself as being, or becoming, “in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι).<sup>50</sup>

In other words, “listen to what the Spirit says” would be shorthand for “listen to what Christ says through *the one who was in the spirit*.”

As can be seen, the divergence can be reduced to the issue of whether “Spirit” should be relegated to Christ or to the seer. Whatever the case, it is obvious that πνεῦμα here is not unambiguously “the Holy Spirit.”<sup>51</sup> The first position, advocating a christological use of “Spirit,” seems more plausible because it better accounts for the Christ—Spirit parallelism, noted above, and also because it offers the simpler solution, in comparison to the exegetical acrobatics required to transform τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει into ἐν πνεύματι λέγει. Similarly to Pauline literature, Revelation

indicates by the word “spirit” the mode in which the Lord exists . . . the power in which he encounters his Church. . . . When Christ is seen in terms of his role for the Church and of his works of power within the Church, he can be identified

<sup>47</sup> E.g., “the seven messages are . . . equated with the words of the exalted Christ” (Bauckham, “Role of the Spirit,” 73); “the author is emphasizing the close relation of the Spirit with the exalted Christ” (Aune, *Revelation*, 1:123); “the Spirit speaks as Christ and Christ as the Spirit” (Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 269).

<sup>48</sup> According to R. W. L. Moberly (“‘Test the Spirits’: God, Love, and Critical Discernment in 1 John 4,” in *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D. G. Dunn* [ed. Graham N. Stanton, Bruce W. Longenecker, and Stephen C. Barton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], 298–99), “John’s concern is here with the discernment of that which purports to belong to the realm of God, that is ‘spirit(s)’. So his basic injunction is clear: ‘Do not believe every spirit,’ that is, do not be gullible, credulous, or unthinking in the spiritual realm, but rather ‘test the spirits’ to see whether claims to be from God are indeed justified.”

<sup>49</sup> Schweizer, *Spirit of God*, 105.

<sup>50</sup> F. F. Bruce, “The Spirit in the Apocalypse,” in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: In Honour of C. F. D. Moule* (ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 340, 339. So also Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 160–61.

<sup>51</sup> Contra Charles Brüscht (*La clarté de l’Apocalypse* [Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1966], 58), who does not even debate the matter: “L’Esprit: *indubitablement*, le Saint-Esprit” (emphasis added).

with the Spirit; but insofar as Christ is also Lord over his own power, he can be distinguished from that power, just as “I” can always be distinguished from the power which goes out from me.<sup>52</sup>

The intimate relation between Christ and the Spirit in early Christian theological reflection (the Fourth Gospel and the Pauline corpus) has been described in various ways by scholars.<sup>53</sup> The identity between the experience of Christ and the experience of the Spirit has been termed “dynamic,” “functional,” “experiential,” “existential,” or “immanent”—meaning that, from the perspective of the Christian, the experience of the Spirit *is* the experience of Christ, which *is* the experience of God the Father. Disagreement occurs only when this type of experiential identity is pushed further to describe the theological relation between Christ and Spirit. Some scholars conclude that the terms are fully interchangeable, and they implicitly question the trinitarian reference to the three terms “God,” “Christ,” and “Spirit”; others forcefully argue against this identification.<sup>54</sup>

I think it is important to recall that we use “binitarianism” and “Spirit christology” to designate the widespread incongruence, in early Christian writings, between theological discourse, on the one hand, and the liturgical, communal, and mystical experience that this discourse recounts, on the other. In the words of H. E. W. Turner, “Christians lived Trinitarianly before the doctrine of the Trinity began to be thought out conceptually.”<sup>55</sup> With this theological disclaimer spelled out clearly, I return to the phrase τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει. My judgment is the following: (a) the hypothesis of Spirit christology in Revelation has the advantage of accounting for the functional and experiential overlap between the “Christ” and “Spirit”; (b) this hypothesis does not allow us to speculate about a personal identification between Christ and the Holy Spirit; (c) this hypothesis seems verified by the similar phenomenon in the Pauline corpus and in other early Christian texts, most notably the *Shepherd of Hermas*; (d) finally, I subscribe to Mehrdad Fatehi’s overall thesis that the identification between the concept of “Spirit of God” in the OT

<sup>52</sup> Schweizer, *Spirit of God*, 60.

<sup>53</sup> Mehrdad Fatehi, *The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul: An Examination of Its Christological Implications* (WUNT 2/128; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000). For the Gospel of John, see Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 137–49.

<sup>54</sup> Fatehi (*Relation*, 23–43) provides an overview of scholarly opinions on the subject, ranging from Hermann Gunkel and Adolf Deissmann, to James D. G. Dunn and Gordon Fee, and many others.

<sup>55</sup> H. E. W. Turner, *Pattern of Christian Truth*, 474; see also 134–35: “If, however, there is a persistent tendency in the early centuries to interpret the Christian doctrine of the Godhead in a bi-personal rather than in a tri-personal manner . . . [t]here is no reason to believe that those who worked normally with a Binitarian phrasing in their theology were other than Trinitarian in their religion. There is no trace, for example, of an alternative Twofold Baptismal Formula.”

and the “Spirit of Christ” in the NT is ultimately christologically motivated, since it identifies Christ as divine.<sup>56</sup>

As noted earlier, scholars of Revelation often speak about the “functional” or “experiential” overlap between Christ and Spirit. In what follows I shall offer a more detailed examination of this topic by discussing the phenomenon of prophecy. I shall argue that, similar to the *Shepherd of Hermas* and Clement of Alexandria, Revelation views the Spirit-experience as a direct influx of the Logos mediated by the *angelic* spirit.

## VI. THE PHENOMENON OF PROPHECY IN REVELATION

Then he [the angel] said to me, Write: “Blessed [are] those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” And he said to me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, See [that you do] not [do that!] I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας. (Rev 19:9–10)

Scholarly interpretations of Rev 19:10 vary, most notably on the issue of whether the genitive Ἰησοῦ is objective or subjective.<sup>57</sup> I judge that the more probable meaning of μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ is “the witness borne by Jesus Christ.” This is suggested by the fact that one of Christ’s fundamental designations in Revelation is “witness” (1:5; 3:14), and especially by the correspondence between the first mention of “witness of Jesus” in 19:10 and “the commands of this book” in 22:9. See the chart on the next page.

<sup>56</sup> Indeed, as Fatehi repeatedly affirms, no mediatorial figure among the so-called exalted, angelomorphic patriarchs is ever presented as having the same relation to the Spirit that the OT affirms of God and his Spirit. An older formulation of this thesis can be found in Max Turner, “The Spirit of Christ and ‘Divine’ Christology,” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ; Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 413–36.

<sup>57</sup> For a survey of positions, see Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1038–39. Cf. the similar debate over the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ in Rom 3:22, 26; Gal 2:16, 20; 3:22; Phil 3:9; Eph 3:12. The option for subjective genitive is a significant minority position: Morna D. Hooker, “Πίστις Χριστοῦ,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 321–42; Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). Revelation’s μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ and the Pauline πίστις Χριστοῦ are both treated in Ian G. Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions* (SNTSMS 84; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 65–127, 169–72. In his survey of patristic treatments of the topic (pp. 175–212), Wallis shows that after figuring prominently in pre-Nicene literature, “the paradigmatic significance of Jesus’ faith . . . was a casualty of the movement towards establishing Christ’s divinity” (p. 212).



Revelation 19:10	Revelation 22:8–9
<p>And I  fell at his feet to worship him.  But he said to me, “See [that you do] not [do that!] I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren  who have <b>the testimony of Jesus</b>. Worship God!” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.</p>	<p>Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, “See [that you do] not [do that.] For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep <b>the words of this book</b>. Worship God!”</p>

The meaning of Rev 19:10 must bear some relation to the visionary's error of worshipping the *angelus interpres*. It may well be that the clause “angels are only fellow servants” functioned as a corrective in the polemic against angel worship.<sup>58</sup> Yet the attempt to worship the angel occurs after an emphatic declaration about the authority of the “true sayings”—very likely the book of Revelation itself. Thus, as some scholars have argued, the theme of angelic worship and its correction are only secondary and subservient to a more important theme: “John's purpose was . . . perhaps, to claim for his brothers a certain primacy in the affairs of churches.”<sup>59</sup> Read in this way, the passage makes perfect sense in the context of early church debates about the status and authority of prophets, or the polemics concerning the criteria of true versus false prophecy.

<sup>58</sup> This mirror reading is confirmed by texts documenting that the veneration of angels was not uncommon in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity: Tob 12:16–22; Col 2:18 (“worship of angels,” although the meaning is not unambiguous); *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 7:21–23; 8:4–5; *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:13–15.

<sup>59</sup> Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (1940; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963), 449; Hanna Roose, “*Das Zeugnis Jesu*”: *Seine Bedeutung für die Christologie, Eschatologie und Prophetie in der Offenbarung des Johannes* (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter; Tübingen: Francke, 2000), 202–8; Prigent, *Commentary*, 529–33. The fact that the divine authority of the book is a crucial theological theme for Revelation becomes evident when 19:10 is read in conjunction with 1:1 and 22:6. For the importance of Christian prophetic circles in Revelation, see Jan Fekkes III, *Isaiah and the Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development* (JSNTSup 93; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 40–41, 49–58; and David E. Aune, “The Prophetic Circle of John of Patmos and the Exegesis of Revelation 22.16.” *JSNT* 37 (1989): 103–16, esp. 108–11.

It seems, then, that “the spirit of prophecy” in Rev 19:10 refers not to the person of the Holy Spirit, or a heavenly agent (“spirit” as angelic being) but to the charisma of the prophets. Additional proof can be gleaned from 22:6. It is interesting to consider the various readings of this verse:

- |      |                             |        |        |          |                |
|------|-----------------------------|--------|--------|----------|----------------|
| (a)  | the Lord God of the spirits | of the |        | prophets | sent his angel |
| (a') | the Lord God of the spirits | of the | holy   | prophets | sent his angel |
| (b)  | the Lord God                | of the | holy   | prophets | sent his angel |
| (c)  | the Lord God of the spirits | and    | of the | prophets | sent his angel |

Obviously, the textual variation reflects a process of interpretation: (a) and (b) agree in that they both refer not to the Holy Spirit but to the receptive faculty of the prophets.<sup>60</sup> The (b) version, lacking *πνεῦμα*, makes the very same point. As for (a'), it seems to combine elements of both: “spirits” from (a) and “holy” from (b). Overall, these versions represent fundamentally the same understanding of the text, as opposed to a different one witnessed by (c). The latter understands *πνεύματα* as distinct entities, separate from the prophets.

This manuscript variation recalls Num 16:22, where the MT has *אל אלהי בכל בשר* (“O God, God of the spirits of all flesh”), thus presenting God as master over all life-endowed creatures, while the LXX reads *Θεὸς θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός* (“O God, God of the spirits and of all flesh”). It seems evident that the LXX turns the text into a statement about God as master of two categories of beings—“spirits,” on the one hand, and humans, on the other. There is overwhelming evidence that this reworking is in accordance with a semantic evolution of *rūah* toward what has been called “the angelic spirit.”<sup>61</sup>

Returning to version (c) of Rev 22:6, and bearing in mind the established tradition of designating God’s sovereignty over the celestial realm by the formula “Lord of spirits” (1 En. 37:2; 39:12) or “Father of spirits” (Heb 12:9), I believe it is legitimate to conclude that this version understands “spirits” as angelic beings subject (together with the prophets) to God.

One thing we may affirm about *πνεύματα* in Rev 22:6 is that, whether it refers to an anthropological reality (a, a') or to angelic beings (c), it does not designate the Holy Spirit. While this conclusion may close one chapter of the discus-

<sup>60</sup> Prigent notes that “the expression is also used by Paul (1 Cor 12:10, 14:32) to designate the prophetic gift, the ability to prophesy” (*Commentary*, 635). Cf. Swete: “they are the natural faculties of the Prophets, raised and quickened by the Holy Spirit, but still under human control, and standing in creaturely relation to God” (*Apocalypse*, 303); Isbon Beckwith: “the divinely illumined spirits of the prophets are meant” (*The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* [New York: Macmillan, 1919], 772); Witherington: “John . . . has in mind not the Holy Spirit but human spirits of the prophets” (*Revelation*, 279). According to Aune (*Revelation* 3:1182), “the psychic faculty of individual prophets rather than to the Spirit of God.”

<sup>61</sup> Levison, “Angelic Spirit,” 475.

sion, it opens up another important problem: in the absence of a reference to the Holy Spirit, what is the understanding of prophecy in this verse? I shall address this question shortly after considering one last passage:

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.” The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Rev 22:16–17)

If it is true that no use of the singular *πνεῦμα* has so far proven to refer to the Holy Spirit, it is unlikely that the writer would have suddenly included such a reference in the final chapter of his book.<sup>62</sup> Once again, *πνεῦμα* stands for something other than the Holy Spirit.

The dialogical setting of the passage, possibly bearing liturgical echoes, places “spirit” and “church” on the same side—namely, the earth—and Christ on the opposite side, in heaven: Christ makes the statement to which, on earth, the Spirit and the church give their response.<sup>63</sup> In this case, it does make good sense to consider that *πνεῦμα* and “bride” are collective terms for “prophets” and “saints”:

*pneuma* is . . . the Spirit of prophecy, the Spirit of the prophetic order; “the Spirit and the Bride” is thus practically equivalent to “the Prophets and the Saints” (16:6, 18:24). The Christian prophets, inspired by the Spirit of Jesus, and the whole Church . . . respond as with one voice to the Lord’s great announcement.<sup>64</sup>

It would be wrong, however, to assume a strict division between the realms of the church, on earth, and Christ, because any response or appeal to Christ, whether private or corporate, is made under divine influence. “Spirit” is a perfect metonymy for “prophets” precisely because the prophet is never a prophet by his or her own power.

I return, therefore, to the question raised above: in the absence of a reference to the Holy Spirit, what is the understanding of prophecy in this verse? The answer to this question lies, I suggest, in the formulas employed by the opening and closing chapters of Revelation: “The revelation . . . sent and signified by his angel to his servant John” (Rev 1:1); “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things for the churches.” (Rev 22:16). Commenting on *διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ* (Rev 1:1), Lupieri notes, “That the first manifestation of God toward humanity is of an angelic

<sup>62</sup> I insist on “singular,” because I take the seven spirits as an angelomorphic reference to the Holy Spirit.

<sup>63</sup> Prigent notes that “one can hardly avoid describing [this dialogue] as liturgical” (*Commentary*, 645). For the liturgical setting of Revelation, see Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 42, with abundant references; Prigent, *Apocalypse et liturgie* (CahT 52; Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1964).

<sup>64</sup> Swete, *Apocalypse*, 310; Kiddle, *Revelation*, 456.

nature superior to all others makes plain that there is a pyramidal angelic hierarchy.”<sup>65</sup> If this type of inspiration is what characterizes prophecy (and the writer clearly considers himself not only a fellow minister of the angels but also one among his brothers, the prophets [22:9]), and if “spirit” is used in Revelation to designate angelic beings, then the following hypothesis can be put forth: prophecy is Christ’s illumining and revelatory action upon the prophet, performed through the mediation of the angel, or rather the angelomorphic Spirit.<sup>66</sup>

This conclusion should not be surprising, because a similar understanding of prophecy occurs in another major apocalyptic work of early Christianity, the *Shepherd of Hermas* (Herm. Mand. 11), and in Clement of Alexandria’s *Eclogae* and *Adumbrationes*:

*The heavens proclaim the glory of God* (Ps 18:2). By “heavens” are designated in manifold ways both “the heavens” pertaining to distance and cycle [= the sky], and the proximate operation [ἐνέργεια προσεχής] of the first-created angels, which pertains to covenant. For the covenants were wrought [ἐνηργήθησαν] by the visitation of angels, namely those upon Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. For, moved by the Lord, the first-created angels worked in [ἐνήργουν εἰς] the angels that are close to the prophets, as they are telling the “glory of God,” (namely) the covenants. But the works accomplished by the angels on earth also came about for “the glory of God,” through the first-created angels. So, (the following) are called “heavens”: in a primary sense, the Lord; but then also the first-created [angels]; and with them also the holy persons (that lived) before the Law, as well as the patriarchs, and Moses and the prophets, and finally the apostles. (*Eclogae* 51–52)

It is clear that the explanations above presuppose Clement’s hierarchical worldview, described earlier. Prophecy occurs when the Logos moves the first rank of the *protoclists*, and this movement is transmitted from one level of the angelic hierarchy down to the next. The lowest angelic rank, which is the one closest to the human world, transmits the “movement” to the prophet. Following the logic of the text, one could say that the prophet represents the highest level in the human hierarchy. As noted earlier, Revelation may have intended, among other things, to claim for the prophets “a certain primacy in the affairs of churches.”<sup>67</sup>

Through a sort of telescoping effect, the first mover—the Logos—is simultaneously far removed from the effect of prophecy and immediately present. This principle of “mediated immediacy” becomes evident when Clement says that Jude refers the action of a lower angel (“an angel near us”) to a superior angelic entity,

<sup>65</sup> Lupieri, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 98.

<sup>66</sup> See Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 265 n. 66, 266–67: the *angelus interpres*, as well as the “voice” of Rev 1:10, and the seven angels before the throne are ways of speaking about the Holy Spirit.

<sup>67</sup> Kiddle, *Revelation*, 449.

the archangel Michael;<sup>68</sup> or when “Moses calls on the power of the angel Michael through an angel near to himself and of the lowest degree (*vicinum sibi et infimum*)” (*Adumbrationes* in 1 John 2:1).

In this light, it is possible to see how Clement understands the traditional statements about the Logos speaking in the prophets ἄγγιζω πνεύματι: the prophet experienced the presence and message of the Logos by receiving the “energy” of the proximate angel.

The view expressed in Clement’s *Adumbrationes* fits rather well with the notion of prophecy in Revelation outlined above. Nevertheless, aside from the “normal” sequence Christ–angelomorphic spirit–prophet, Revelation also speaks of the visionary being commanded to address his prophetic word to the angels of the seven churches. This detail, “a written message destined for an angelic rather than a human audience” comes, according to Lupieri, “from the Enochic tradition.”<sup>69</sup> Ultimately, however, the recipients of the messages are the congregations. Since the mediators of these messages are the prophets, and given the intimate link between the prophet and the inspiring agent—namely, the angelomorphic sevenfold spirit, since “John mentions the *seven* churches precisely for having *seven* angels to whom he can write”<sup>70</sup>—the messages are said to be addressed to the “angels of the churches.” I suggest that they represent a summons to the prophets to exercise their charisma by relaying the respective messages to their congregations.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

Reading Revelation in light of second-century writings such as the *Shepherd of Hermas* or Clement’s *Excerpta, Eclogae*, and *Adumbrationes* has led to highlighting the following three elements: (a) a multilevel cosmos populated by an angelic hierarchy, dominated by the seven angels “first created”; (b) a theological framework that is fundamentally binitarian, even though certain “(pre)-trinitarian” elements are undeniably present; (c) a theory of angelic interaction according to which communication between the divine and the human world is passed on—“channeled,” as it were—from Christ to the *protoctists* and further down along the angelic hierarchy until it reaches the highest representative of the Christian community—not the bishop, as some centuries later in Ps.-Dionysius’s *Hierarchies*, but the prophet, as in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and Clement’s *Hypotyposeis*.

<sup>68</sup> “When the archangel Michael, disputing with the devil, was arguing over the body of Moses. This confirms the *Assumption of Moses*. ‘Michael’ here designates the one who argued with the devil through an angel close to us” (*Adumbrationes* in Jude 9).

<sup>69</sup> Lupieri, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 115.

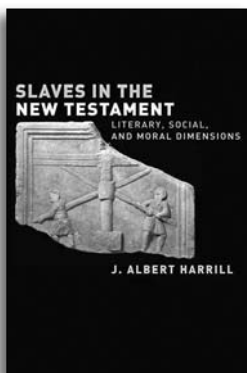
<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

There can be no question that Revelation's group of seven spirits/angels before the divine throne (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6; 8:2) echoes angelological speculations common in Second Temple Judaism. It is equally true, however, that the traditions about the highest angelic company underwent considerable modifications. One example in this regard is the subordination of the *protocists* to the Son of God: Zechariah's "eyes of the Lord" (Zech 4:10) are reinterpreted as the seven horns and eyes of the Lamb (Rev 5:6), and, "since the lesson of the vision is 'not by might nor by power but by the Spirit' (Zech 4:6), the lamps of the lampstand, the eyes of the Lord, are his Spirit."<sup>71</sup> Revelation illustrates the continuation in early Christianity of the Second Temple tradition about the seven principal angels and its reworking in the service of pneumatology.<sup>72</sup>

I have also argued that these views are, by the standards of today's biblical exegesis, legitimate readings of Revelation. Whether they correspond to the intentions of Revelation's author must remain an issue of debate.

<sup>71</sup> Bauckham, "Role of the Spirit," 76.

<sup>72</sup> Bauckham ("Role of the Spirit," 66) goes so far as to say that "the prominence of the Spirit is one of the characteristics which mark the Apocalypse out from the category of apocalyptic works in which its literary genre places it."



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