

NUMENIUS AND THE HELLENISTIC SOURCES OF THE CENTRAL CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

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Quis obsecro, nisi penitus amens logomachias has sine risu toleraret? Nec in Thalmud, nec in Alchoran, sunt tam horrendae blasfemiae. Haec nos hactenus audire ita sumus alsuefacti, ut nihil miremur. Futurae vero generationes stupenda haec iudicabunt. Stupenda sunt vere, plusquam ea daemonum inventa, quae Valentinianis tribuit Irenaeus.

I implore you, who in his sane mind could tolerate such logomachias without bursting into laughter? Not in the Talmud, nor in the Qu'ran can one find such horrendous blasphemies. But we are accustomed to hear them to the point that nothing astonishes us. Future generations will judge them obscure. Indeed, they are obscure, much more than the diabolic inventions which Irenaeus attributed to the Valentinians.¹

Si locum mihi aliquem ostendas, quo verbum illud filius olim vocetur, fatebor me victum.

If you show me a single passage in which the Son was called the Word, I will give up.²

Abstract

This article attempts to explain the sources of the central Christian doctrine about the nature of the Deity. We can trace a continuous line of thought from Greek philosophy to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The earliest post-biblical Christology was developed by Justin Martyr (114-165 CE). He speculated on religious matters in the philosophical terms of his time. He introduced new concepts and phrases not found in the synoptic Gospels and followed Philo's road to Hellenization of the Hebrew Bible. The primary influence exerted on him was the writings of the Greek Middle Platonic philosopher Numenius of Apamea (ca 150 CE). Numenius in turn followed the Platonic tradition via Xenocrates of Chalcedon (d. 314 BCE).

¹ Michael Servetus, *Christianismi Restitutio, De Trinitate*, lib. I, 46.

² Michael Servetus, *Christianismi Restitutio, De Trinitate*, lib. III, 108.

Introduction

Until the middle of the 19th century the world was considered to be static and not undergoing changes. The same view was extended to the realm of ideas and especially to religious doctrines, which, it was believed, were established once and forever. This was later to be changed with the development of new evolutionary ideas which were applied not only to the external world where the process was originally discovered, but also to ideology, and obviously to religious thought. We came to the realization that religious ideology, theology, evolves with the rest of human endeavors. Thus we can label the 21st century as the century of evolutionary outlook.

There are two, it seems so far, major directions of thought, though overlapping, related to religion: 1. One is the critical study and reevaluation of the written sources of various religions, in Christianity in modern times probably initiated by Samuel Reimarus at the end of the 17th century. 2. The other one is a diversified movement which tends to accommodate the natural sciences to religious doctrines or religious doctrines to natural sciences, depending on whom we ask. As initiators of this type of approach we may consider Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Alfred North Whitehead, and Charles Hartshorne.³ This movement labeled “process theology” is expressed in religious formulations derived only from philosophical speculations.

The Key Theoretical Issue

1. Warning by Erasmus

The key theoretical issue in the first movement of thought is the interpretation of the office, status, and person of Jesus. It was traditionally formulated and codified, even in the law, in the form of Trinitarian dogma. The incendiary character of this issue was already feared by Erasmus who wrote prophetically in the preface to the 1523 edition of *The Trinity* by the church father Hilary of Poitiers (ca 315-367)⁴

The ancients philosophized very little about divine things. The curious subtlety of the Arians drove the orthodox to greater necessity...Let the ancients be pardoned...but what excuse is there for us, who raise so many curious, not to say impious, questions about matters far removed from our nature? We define so many things which may be left in ignorance or in doubt without loss of salvation. **Is it not possible to have fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit without**

³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, New York: The Free Press, 1985, first pub. 1929. Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000.

⁴ Saint Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, Stephen McKenna, trans. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1954.

being able to explain philosophically the distinction between them and between the nativity of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit? If I believe the tradition that there are three of one nature, what is the use of labored disputation? If I do not believe, I shall not be persuaded by any human reasons... You will not be damned if you do not know whether the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son has one or two beginnings, but you will not escape damnation if you do not cultivate the fruits of the Spirit which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, long suffering, mercy, faith, modesty, continence, and chastity...The sum of our religion is peace and unanimity, but these can scarcely stand unless we define as little as possible, and in many things leave each one free to follow his own judgment, because there is great obscurity in many matters, and man suffers from this almost congenital disease that he will not give in when once a controversy is started, and after he is heated he regards as absolutely true that which he began to sponsor quite casually...Many problems are now reserved for an ecumenical council. It would be better to defer questions of this sort to the time when, no longer in a glass darkly, we see God face to face...**Formerly, faith was in life rather than in the profession of creeds.** Presently, necessity required that articles be drawn up, but only a few with apostolic sobriety. Then the depravity of the heretics exacted a more precise scrutiny of the divine books...**When faith came to be in writings rather than in hearts, then there were almost as many faiths as men. Articles increased and sincerity decreased. Contention grew hot and love grew cold. The doctrine of Christ, which at first knew no hair splitting, came to depend on the aid of philosophy. This was the first stage in the decline of the Church...**The injection of the authority of the emperor into this affair did not greatly aid the sincerity of faith...When faith is in the mouth rather than in the heart, when the solid knowledge of Sacred Scripture fails us, nevertheless by terrorization we drive men to believe what they do not believe, to love what they do not love, to know what they do not know. That which is forced cannot be sincere, and that which is not voluntary cannot please Christ.⁵

⁵ Latin version is found in *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, re-edited and revised by P.S. Allen and H.M. Allen, Oxonii in Typographeo Clarendomiano, 1924, vol. 5, no. 1334, 173-192. English version in Erasmus, *Collected Works*, 9:245-274; the quoted version in Bainton, *Hunted Heretic*, 33-34.

2. Four Patterns of Christianity

Someone estimated that there have been about 23,000 Christianities. This may be an optimistic underestimate — one should say rather that there are probably as many Christianities as there are believers claiming to be Christians. Such a statement, however, is not productive for the evaluation of the evolution of a religion. It would be better if we could differentiate some general patterns in the development of key religious doctrine. It seems that the evolution of Christianity can be analyzed in terms of four general patterns:

1. Jewish Messianism with the figure of the Messiah as a glorified man and the expected earthly Kingdom of God. This is the basic message of early Christianity though one can distinguish here the Pauline and Gospel varieties. This pattern was revived in the doctrine of the Socinian Church in the 16th century.⁶

2. Hellenistic Christianity in its two forms: in one the Messiah figure was transformed into the cosmic Greek Logos; in the other, which is Gnostic, the Logos is only one of many divine manifestations.

3. Trinitarian or syncretistic Christianity which strives to preserve the unitarian character of the Divinity, in spite of adopting Greek triadic speculations, by incorporating Egyptian triune doctrine. But in fact it abolishes the unitarian Hebrew concept of the Divinity. The Trinitarian synthesis for a variety of coincidental historical reasons became the dominant doctrine widely popularized.

4. Servetian unitarian Christianity which interprets the Divinity and its manifestations as a historical, modalistic process. This pattern found its modern expression in the so-called “process theology” of which Servetus was a precursor.⁷

Christian churches, following the Roman Catholic Church, maintained until recently that the doctrine of the triune God was contained in the scriptural texts of the Old and the New Testaments. The doctrine was firmly established in the fourth century by combining it with a means of coercion in the form of law and preventing any independent scholarly study of the sacred texts. It took the Reformation and Radical Reformation to initiate a painful and often bloodily

⁶ Marian Hillar, “Laelius and Faustus Socinus, Founders of Socinianism: Their Lives and Theology,” in *A Journal from the Radical Reformation*, Part I, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2002; Part II, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2002.

⁷ Marian Hillar, *The Case of Michael Servetus (1511-1553): The Turning Point in the Struggle for Freedom of Conscience*, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997. Marian Hillar with Claire Allen, *Michael Servetus: Intellectual Giant, Humanist, and Martyr*, University Press of America, 2002. Marian Hillar, “Process Theology and Process Thought in the Writings of Michael Servetus,” paper presented at the annual Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference, San Antonio, Texas, October 24-27, 2002.

repressed process of reevaluation of the sacred texts and a return to their original meaning.

The orthodox Catholic Christian concept of the unity of God in the Trinity was developed slowly as a result of a long process of mixing various ideologies.⁸ The whole idea of the Trinity came about as a syncretistic development from the clash of: 1. The Hebrew unitarian concept of God; 2. The Greek religious-philosophical concepts of the nature of God and the powers governing the world; 3. The mixing of Greek religious ideas about a Savior who acts as a mediator between God and humans with the Hebrew concept of the Messiah, who was presented and expected as a national liberator; 4. The Egyptian religious concept of the triune Divinity.

The acceptance of Trinitarian doctrine is based on human psychological conditioning. Even today, most Christians when facing the obvious scholarly arguments against the Trinity in Scripture, bluntly refuse to consider them because they feel a threat to their belief. This concept reflects the presumed highest level of piety by ascribing to Christ-Messiah all possible perfections we can humanly imagine, thus equating him ontologically with the Divinity.

3. The Old Testament and the Unity of God

God in the Old Testament is one *par excellence* and has several names, but His proper name is Yahweh (Jehovah). He is a God with mixed characteristics: He is father to His own chosen people; He made an eternal covenant with them; He is cruel and vengeful to the enemies of Israel. God promised the Israelites eternal salvation in the form of a new earthly Israel and a new world (supernatural or ideal) introduced by a human Messiah. His name as a father is nothing new. We find it in many cultures and it is associated with His function as a creator and protector of the nation, kings, and individual Israelites. Often His subjects are named His sons, often the entire nation, and especially prominent figures like kings and priests. God acts through His utterances, the word (*davar*, *logos*), which may be considered His creative agent. Jews considered their history and Law as a word revealed by Yahweh. Under Greek influence certain concepts were introduced such as Wisdom (*sophía*) into Jewish writings. There are in Proverbs, in the Wisdom of Solomon, and in the Wisdom of Sirach vivid statements about Wisdom as the companion of God, as an image of His goodness, as **the first-born before all creation**, and the worker of all things. It is easy to envisage wisdom as a person and an agent. At the same time, it is acting in humans as human wisdom. Jews did not consider it a separate entity, but rather

⁸ Anthony F. Buzzard and Charles F. Hunting, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound*, University Press of America, 1998. George Wesley Buchanan, *Jesus the King and His Kingdom*, Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984. John A.T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*, London: SCM Press, 1985.

a divine attribute, God's activity, and often as the Jewish Law which was considered to be pre-existent. Nevertheless, the apologists used it as evidence of the pre-existence of the Word, and Arius as evidence that Christ was a pre-existing created being.⁹

As to the Spirit, in the Old Testament the word *ruach* originally meant wind and breath. It was the general view in antiquity that breathing was associated with acquiring the vivifying power that animated living things. This was a good biological observation but could not be explained in rational naturalistic terms before the discovery of oxygen and its role in circulation. Since God was considered the life-giving power, the term Spirit designated the all-pervading presence of God and His substance. But the term acquired several other meanings and was used in expressing the Spirit of Yahweh: 1. as an action of God, His creative force; 2. as His saving power; 3. as the charismatic effect and imparted spirit or gift to kings, judges, and especially to the Messianic king; 4. as a power imparted to man which renews him inwardly; 5. as an instrument illuminating the prophets and producing a special mood to understand the word of God and the strength to proclaim it. In the Messianic age this outpouring of spirit will affect all people. Though the Spirit was described in personal terms, it is clear that the Jews and the writers of the Old Testament never regarded the Spirit as a person. In these formulations there is no concept of an additional "person" or "entity" in God; thus there is no basis for the ontological entity called the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

Though the Old Testament contains the term "word" which was later used in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, "Nowhere in the Old Testament is there any solid evidence that a sacred writer viewed the Word of Yahweh as a personal being distinct from Yahweh himself and thus had intentions of plurality within the Godhead. The Word of Yahweh is only Yahweh acting, or the means by which he revealed his will to men."¹¹

4. The Trinity and Modern Scholarship

Anthony Buzzard in his exhaustive analysis of the Trinitarian question describes it in these words:

It appears that expert Trinitarian exegesis often weakens the attempt to base the Trinity on Scripture. There are no texts advanced in support of the Godhead which have not been assigned another interpretation by Trinitarians themselves. Can the biblical doctrine of God really be so

⁹ A.W. Wainwright, *The Trinity and the New Testament*, London, 1962, 34. J. Lebreton, *History of the Dogma of the Trinity*, trans. by A. Thorold, New York, 1939, 93-94.

¹⁰ Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples*, introduction and translation by George Wesley Buchanan, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970, 53-55.

¹¹ Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972, 5.

obscure! It may be simpler to accept the *shema* of Israel and its belief in a unipersonal God. Since this was the creed spoken by Jesus himself, it would seem to have an absolute claim to be the Christian creed. Nothing of the glory of the Son is lost if he is recognized as the unique human representative of God for whom God created the whole universe.¹²

Modern theologians come finally to acknowledge that there is nothing in the New Testament writings that would warrant discussion about the divinity of Jesus or his pre-existence and the Trinity. In his 1972 exhaustive study Edmund J. Fortman, a Catholic theologian, summarized it this way:

The formulation of this dogma was the most important theological achievement of the first five centuries of the Church...yet this monumental dogma, celebrated in the liturgy by the recitation of the Nicene Creed, seems to many even within the Church to be a museum piece, with little or no relevance to the crucial problems of contemporary life and thought. And to those outside the Church, the Trinitarian dogma is a fine illustration of the absurd length to which theology has been carried, a bizarre formula of "sacred arithmetic."¹³

Fortman's study was followed recently by that of another Catholic theologian, Karl-Josef Kuschel, and by that of Anthony F. Buzzard and Charles F. Hunting.¹⁴ The prominent Catholic theologian Karl-Josef Kuschel states: "The New Testament does not know the pre-existence as a speculative theme. A pre-existence Christology understood as an isolated, independent, atomized reflection on a divine being of Jesus Christ 'in' or 'alongside' God before the world, a sonship understood in metaphysical terms, is not the concern of the New Testament."¹⁵ And he admits that pre-existence is not direct revelation, but a result of theological speculation.

This speculation was developed in the first three centuries and though it is considered by Christian church leaders to be the most important doctrine of Christianity, it has no relevance to the problems of human life and thought. It has no basis in the Scriptures regarded as the foundation of the Christian religion. It is simply the best illustration of the absurdity of theological deliberations. One can understand, however, why it was possible to develop such a bizarre doctrine if one follows the evolutionary pattern of the rise of the new religion.

¹² Anthony F. Buzzard, "The Challenge Facing Trinitarianism Today," in *A Journal from the Radical Reformation*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1993, 23-44.

¹³ Fortman, *The Triune God*.

¹⁴ Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Born Before All Time? The Dispute over Christ's Origin*, trans. by John Bowden, New York: Crossroad, 1992. Anthony F. Buzzard and Charles F. Hunting, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound*, University Press of America, 1998.

¹⁵ Kuschel, 491-492.

Let us ponder now what a theological speculation is. Father Ceslaus Velecky, one of the translators and commentators of Thomas Aquinas, states that theology is examining “ideas and words” about “what God told us about Himself...through prophets and apostles.” And he admits that if it were not for the disclosure in the Scripture, the idea of “three Selves” of God “would never have occurred to us.”¹⁶ But the “disclosure” or revelation never meant those things deduced from it by Aquinas and the rest of the post-Nicene tradition. To understand the true meaning of the words and concepts used in the Scriptures one has to consider the mentality of the people who wrote them and the ideological, world-view context of the epoch in which they lived. Some of these topics were recently exhaustively studied and we refer the reader to these studies.¹⁷

The subject of my study is to examine how the main doctrine of Christianity evolved: what are its philosophical and religious foundations, how the scriptural texts themselves arose and how their reading evolved with time in the clash of cultures. This process did not stop and new readings appear even today, though far removed from the original intention of the scriptural texts, as they are confronted especially with a better and verifiable explanation of reality, both human and cosmic, produced by rational inquiry including what we call today the scientific approach.¹⁸ This article is focused on one topic, namely, how the **earliest Christian doctrine**, besides the doctrine of Paul which we may classify as radically Jewish, though partially Hellenized,¹⁹ was developed.

Justin Martyr and the Earliest Christian Doctrine

Justin Martyr (114-165 CE) is the first Christian apologist who speculated on religious matters in the philosophical terms of his time and attempted to build a coherent system of thought.²⁰ Due to his background in Greek schooling,²¹ he

¹⁶ In St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Latin text and English translation, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965, Vol. 6, *The Trinity*, translation, introduction, and notes by Ceslaus Velecky, Appendix 1, 123.

¹⁷ Buzzard, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound* and Kuschel, *Born Before All Time?*

¹⁸ Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*, HarperSan Francisco, 1997. Tad S. Clements, *Science vs. Religion*, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990.

¹⁹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, translated by William Montgomery London A. & C. Black, 1931.

²⁰ Leslie William Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 1967. Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr: An Investigation into Conceptions of Early Christian Literature and its Hellenistic and Judaic Influences*, Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968; reprint of the first edition, Jena, 1928. Giuseppe Girgenti, *Giustino Martire: il primo cristiano platonico con il appendice 'Atti del martirio di San Giustino,'* presentazione di Claudio Moreschini, Milano: Vita e pensiero, 1995. Theodore

introduced new concepts and phrases not found in the synoptic Gospels and followed Philo's road to Nicea. His doctrines were formed under the influence of various religious and philosophical trends of his time. He was influenced by Jewish biblical exegesis, by Judeo-Christian writings, by Christian Gnostic doctrines, by Greek religious doctrines, and by Middle Platonism. However, the primary influences exerted on him were the writings of Philo of Alexandria, whom he mentions by name three times in the *Dialogue with Trypho*,²² and the Greek philosopher Numenius. But Justin does not adhere to Philo's doctrines slavishly; he expands the doctrines and concepts of Philo, mixing them with the philosophical interpretations of Numenius and adapting such a mixture to the new Christian story recorded in the Gospels. Justin, in turn, influenced other Christian writers and was quoted by Tatian, his disciple, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Eusebius of Caesarea.

Justin's Metaphysical Triad

The Father

In defending Christians against accusations from the Hellenes that they were "atheists," Justin presents the argument that they believe in and worship the Triad, though one feels that he senses a conflict between this formulation and belief in one God: "We revere and worship Him Most True God 'who is the Father of justice, temperance, and the other virtues' and the Son who came forth from Him and taught us these things,...and the Prophetic Spirit [πνεῦμά προφητικόν]."²³ And a little later: "We worship the Creator of this world...Our Teacher of these things is Jesus Christ, who was born for this end, and who was crucified...We shall prove that we worship Him with reason, since we have learned that He is the Son of the living God Himself, and believe Him to be in the second place, and the Prophetic Spirit [Pneuma] in the third."²⁴ The triadic formula is also used in baptism which was interpreted as a "rebirth," "remission

Stylianopoulos, *Justin Martyr and the Mosaic Law*, Cambridge, MA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975. Eric Francis Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1973. Cullen I.K. Story, *The Nature of Truth in "The Gospel of Truth" and in the Writings of Justin Martyr: A Study of the Pattern of Orthodoxy in the Middle of the Second Christian Century*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970. Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement, and Origen*, Oxford University Press, 1966. Giorgio Otranto, *Esegesi biblica e storia in Giustino (Dial. 63-84)*, Bari: Istituto di letteratura cristiana, Università, 1979.

²¹ M.J. Edwards, "On the Platonic Schooling of Justin Martyr," in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1991, 42:1, 17-34.

²² Miroslav Marcovich, Edouardo Des Places, editors, *Justin Dialogus cum Tryphone*, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997, cc. IX, X, XIII.

²³ *I Apol.* c. VI.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, c. XIII.

of the sins formerly committed,” and a sort of moral illumination with the divine force, the Logos.²⁵ Other instances of this triadic formula are the eucharistic prayer and blessing offered at the ceremonial communal meal.²⁶ These passages remind one quite literally of the writing of Numenius. Justin differs from Numenius in that he ascribes biblical appellations to each divine entity whereas Numenius describes them in philosophical Platonic categories. Moreover, the second divine entity is represented by an individual, Jesus Christ, who from being the Jewish Messiah became the Greek Savior. These passages seem to be an expression of a belief in three separate divine entities with three different names. But one has to analyze what Justin says further about these three names to understand the relationship between them.

The concept of God among early Christians was the same as that represented by the Hebrew biblical texts since they considered themselves Jews. In Hellenistic Judaism God acquired, in addition, certain characteristics typical of Greek metaphysical thought such as His cosmic function and transcendentalism, without losing His previous characteristics. Such an interpretation of God became useful and more appropriate later for Pauline Christians when Paul introduced an ontological intermediary between God and man in the form of the pneumatic being Christ. At the same time the revelation of Christ replaced the Torah as the ruling moral and ritual law.

Justin basically inherited from Hellenistic Judaism such a mixed Greco-Jewish picture of the Deity. God the Father is described by Justin as the Father of virtues,²⁷ the Father and Creator of all,²⁸ the only unbegotten and impassible God,²⁹ who is unchangeable and immovable in accordance with his Middle Platonic conception of God.

The concept of an unmoved God, the first mover, was introduced by Aristotle into Middle Platonism probably through Eudorus of Alexandria (ca 25 BCE) who emphasized the transcendence of God (the supreme God) as “The One.”³⁰ By this Justin, as well as Philo, denied any spatial movement, spatial determination or change of nature to God³¹ and intended to refute the Stoic concept of an immanent God and identification of God with the world. But this concept remains more a philosophical notion than a religious assertion since

²⁵ *Ibid.*, c. LXI.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, cc. LXV, LXVII.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, c. VI.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, c. VIII.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, cc. XIV, XXV.

³⁰ R.E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism*, Cambridge, 1937. John Dillon, *Middle Platonism* London, 1977. Alcinous, *The Handbook of Platonism*, translated by John Dillon, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

³¹ *Dialogue with Trypho*, cc. III, CXXVII. *Conf.* XXVII.

neither Philo nor Justin adhere to it, but represent God, in accordance with the very strong Hebrew tradition, as remaining “in a place to himself”³² or “remaining in a place wherever it may be,” or describe God as one “who is in the heavens” or the “Lord who dwells in heaven.”³³

The description of God as unbegotten (ἀγέννητος) was commonly used in Greek philosophy with the meaning that God had existence without an external source; thus He was a self-causing being.³⁴ Justin uses this term to distinguish the existence of God the Father from that of Christ, the Son of God who had a beginning and a cause.

On the contrary, God is the Maker or Creator Himself and there is no higher God than the Creator.³⁵ This was a response made to the claim of the Christian Gnostics who, following Platonic doctrines, maintained that the God of the Old Testament as Creator (Demiurge) could not be a true God but a God of evil if He had contact with matter. Therefore, they postulated the existence of another good God of the New Testament as an absolutely transcendent deity and different in kind. Justin, on the contrary, insisted on the continuity of the Old and New Testaments and the identity of the Gods represented there. Thus he always describes God as the Maker or Creator (δημιουργός) to the extent that he forgets about the share which he ascribed in the process to the Logos.

And following Hebrew tradition Justin declares that He has no name, but because of His good deeds and functions He has several appellations (προσθήσεις): “The words Father, and God, and Creator, and Lord, and Master are not real names, but rather terms of address derived from His beneficent deeds.”³⁶ This namelessness is a consequence of God’s being unbegotten since the name must be given by a predecessor and “No one gives a name to the ineffable [or unutterable, ἄρητος] God.”³⁷ For Philo names were symbolic of created things; therefore they were not applicable to an uncreated God.³⁸

By using the term “unutterable” Justin wants to emphasize still more the transcendentality of God, His incomprehensibility and inaccessibility to the human mind. Thus Justin felt the need for a revelation through the Logos/Christ concerning religious ritual with moral power (e.g., baptism),³⁹ doctrinal education,⁴⁰ and moral instruction.⁴¹

³² *Leg. All.* I. XIV. Cf. *Som.* I. XI.

³³ *Dialogue with Trypho*, cc. LVI, LX, CXXVII.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, B 4, 999 b 7.

³⁵ *I Apol.* c. XVI. *Dialogue with Trypho*, cc. XI, LX.

³⁶ *II Apol.* c. VI.

³⁷ *I Apol.* c. LXI.

³⁸ *Mut.* XII, XIV. *Som.* XXXIX. *Mos.* I, XIV.

³⁹ *I Apol.*, c. LXI.

⁴⁰ *II Apol.*, cc. X, XIII.

Thus God in Justin's concept was not a being completely alienated from the world and, as such, had to be active though unmoved. Following Aristotle's assumption that God, though an absolute, must have some activity to be useful for mankind,⁴² Justin, Philo, and the Middle Platonists ascribed to God the function of thinking and causing existence to all things, and through the intermediary power the function of administering, forming, and ordering the world. Justin made God the cause of the second God: "God is the cause of His [the second God's] power and of His being Lord and God."⁴³ And paraphrasing Plato, who Justin claims imitated Christians, he implies that God the Father is the first God.⁴⁴ Moreover, wanting to contrast the Christian God with that of the Stoics, he emphasizes the autonomy and freedom of action of God.⁴⁵ But Justin could not explain how a transcendent God could interact with the world without an intermediary.

The Son

The second name is the Son, who, according to Justin, "came forth from Him [the Father] and taught us these things [justice, temperance, and other virtues]...and the Prophetic Spirit [Pneuma] [τὸ προφητικὸν πνεῦμα]."⁴⁶ The structure of the sentence indicates that the Son is treated as a being separate from God (he came from God) and from the Prophetic Spirit (Pneuma). This is stressed more when Justin, as if expanding Philo's theory of the two powers of God, and making reference to Numenius' second God, insists on the identification of the Son with a Spirit (incorporeal Pneuma which was the essence, i.e., being and substance of Divinity), therefore a separate being, and not only a power (i.e., an attribute) of God: "It is not right, therefore, to understand the Spirit [πνεῦμα, Pneuma] and the Power [δύναμις] of God as anything else than the Logos, who is also the first-begotten of God, as Moses, the previously mentioned prophet, has stated."⁴⁷ Justin speaks here as if he is trying to correct some erroneous views being spread around. And he explains the identity of the Son using the common philosophical term of an intermediary between God and the visible world. The Logos Son is thus a pneumatic effluence from God, which view will be confirmed by Justin in his treatment of the spermatic Logos. We learn that the first-begotten, the Son, is the Logos and a Spirit (Pneuma) and the Power of God. More explicitly and following Philo and the Middle Platonists

⁴¹ *I Apol.*, cc. XV, XVI.

⁴² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Λ 6, Λ 7.

⁴³ *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. CXXIX.

⁴⁴ *I Apol.*, c. LX.5.

⁴⁵ *I Apol.*, c. XIX. *II Apol.*, c. VII. *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. LXXXIV.

⁴⁶ *I Apol.*, c. VI.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, c. XXXIII.

directly, Justin teaches us that the Son is also the Power and the Logos: “The first power after God the Father and Lord of all things is the Logos [Word], who is also His Son, who assumed human flesh and became man in the manner which we shall presently explain.”⁴⁸ “And it was this Spirit [Pneuma] who came upon the virgin, overshadowed (or rather overpowered) her and brought it about that she became pregnant, not by sexual intercourse, but by divine power.”⁴⁹ In this statement Justin indicates that it was the Logos itself, and not the Holy Spirit (Holy Pneuma), as the third Divinity, who was the agent of his own incarnation. There are also statements of Justin which suggest directly that Jesus Christ was born through the power of the Logos which was given to him by the Father.⁵⁰ This means that the Logos engineered his own conception by the power received from God the Father.

This strong subordinate relationship between the Son and the Father is still more emphasized when Justin claims that the power of Christ to overcome demons was given to him by God.⁵¹ Moreover, his resurrection was accomplished by the power of God.⁵² Justin states that Christ “boasts not in accomplishing anything through his own will or might.”⁵³ Christ, though sinless, was in need of salvation and this was accomplished by his resurrection.⁵⁴ He was in the power of death like every man; thus he had to descend into Hades, where he waited for his resurrection and return to heaven, where he is preparing for his glorious second coming.⁵⁵

A tradition that the power of God and the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) are the same must have been around in Justin’s time.⁵⁶ It must have represented the oldest Christian/Jewish belief since Justin gives his explanation just before quoting Luke (1:31-35) that Jesus was conceived by the intervention of the Holy Spirit (τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα). And in the Christian tradition until the end of the fourth century it was maintained that the Logos was the agent of the miraculous conception.⁵⁷

Jesus’ generation was nothing new in the Hellenic and Mediterranean world where Zeus begat sons and daughters with human women, and even without a

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, c. XXXII.

⁴⁹ *I Apol.*, c. XXXIII. *Dialogue with Trypho*. Logos is the Power of God as in *I Apol.*, cc. XXIII, XXXII, LX. *II Apol.*, c. X.

⁵⁰ *I Apol.*, c. XLVI. *Dialogue with Trypho*, cc. XCVIII, CXXXIX.

⁵¹ *Dialogue with Trypho*, cc. XXX, XLIX.

⁵² John 10:18; Matt. 11:27. *Dialogue with Trypho*, cc. XCV, C, CVI. *I Apol.* c. XLV.

⁵³ *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. CI.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, cc. LXXIII, CI, CII.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, cc. XXXII, XXXVI.

⁵⁶ *Protevangelium of James* XI.2, in *New Testament Apocrypha*, rev. ed. by Wilhelm Schneemelger, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991, Vol. I.

⁵⁷ Tertullian, *Adv. Praxean*, XXVI. Cyprian, *De Idol. Van. Hilary, Trinit.*, II. 24, 26.

sexual connotation as Justin himself admits.⁵⁸ And the virgin birth was chosen as the mechanism of incarnation because this process did not involve a sexual process which was considered a sin.⁵⁹ Jesus thus is called the Son of God in accordance with Greek usage.

But when he is also called the Christ then reference is made to the Hebrew meaning of the term “Son of God” as the human Messiah and ruler over Jews. And Justin adds a twist, expanding the old Hebrew prophecies as referring to the coming of the supernatural cosmic being Christ, who we might term the Christian Messiah, and his rule over the world.⁶⁰ This cosmic being has now a universal salvation function which was expected in the Hellenic world. Thus the Jewish Messiah was transformed by Justin into the Greek Savior.

Addressing the Greeks, Justin explains, “When, indeed, we assert that the Logos, our Teacher Jesus Christ, who is the first-begotten of God the Father, was not born as the result of sexual relations...we propose nothing new or different from that which you say about the so-called sons of Jupiter.”⁶¹ Thus Jesus Christ and the Logos as a pneumatic being, who is the first-born, are the same being since “the Logos himself, who assumed a human form...became man, and was called Jesus Christ.”⁶² Whereas Philo could not decide whether the creative power of God or Logos should become a separate pneumatic being, Justin emphasizes its individuality. Moreover, it became incarnate in the person of Jesus following the usual Greek method of impregnating human women by the action of the Power of God.

We face head on in these passages a crucial ideological distinction between Hebrew and Greek/Mediterranean cultures.⁶³ The original Hebrew concept of the Son of God acquired, through Justin, the Greek meaning. Justin clearly took the term Son of God literally; moreover, he equated the biblical Messiah/Christ with the Greek cosmic Logos and as found in the works of Philo of Alexandria.⁶⁴

There is another important issue involved here. The Greek term *pneuma* is usually translated “spirit” (from the Latin *spiritus*), and technically it means the same thing in Latin. In modern languages and usage, the term acquired a different meaning from the original one it had in antiquity and the writings of the first Christians. It was a technical term derived from Stoic philosophy which described a divine substance, a substance of divine beings — God, angels, souls

⁵⁸ *I Apol.*, c. XXII.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, cc. XXI, XXXIII.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, c. XXXIII.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, c. XXI.

⁶² *Ibid.*, c. V.

⁶³ William Sanday, *Divine Overruling*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920, 41.

⁶⁴ Justin himself gives ample descriptions of the generations of Greek gods and divine heroes. *I Apol.*, cc. XXI, XXII. *Dialogue with Trypho*, cc. LXIX, LXX.

— and though it was incorporeal (or sometimes corporeal) it was a certain tenuous substance considered active and intelligent, close to air, cosmic fire, or ether, depending on the philosophical system. This substance was not matter, however, since matter was composed of the four usual elements and considered passive. The concept itself has roots in Sumerian/Akkadian religious doctrines from which it was transferred to the Hebrew Bible.⁶⁵ The term is an exact equivalent of the term רוּחַ (*ruach*) in Hebrew when not used in its metaphorical sense. In spite of His attribute of being unconfined (ἀχώρηστος), God was represented in Greek, Hebrew, and Christian cultures as located in a physically limited space, heaven, which was also the abode of all other divine beings, and made of the incorporeal, tenuous substance.⁶⁶ Theophilus (ca 180), bishop of Antioch, used the term in exactly the same way.⁶⁷

Whether or not we consider the “spirit...hovering over the waters” (Gen. 1:2) as a separate being derived from God the Father, e.g., the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) or God Himself, the divine substance was the pneuma and it was one and the same regardless of how many beings were “begotten” from the same God.

Moreover, pneumatic beings, like the Logos, angels, demons, and souls, could have physical sensations and interactions with humans, were spatially delineated, could be spatially displaced, and even, in the case of the evil angels, the demons, were to be subjected to eternal physical suffering in eternal fire.⁶⁸ The demons were located somewhere in a limited physical space (underground in Hades, Gehenna or Tartarus; the earth [land] was considered to be flat in the biblical worldview).

This understanding of pneuma was explicitly indicated by Tertullian in his *Contra Praxean* and in *De Carne Christi*. After a lengthy discussion of the generation of the Logos which “is a certain substance, constructed by the Spirit [Pneuma],” Tertullian proves that its substance must be the same as the pneuma of God: “For who will deny that God is a body, although God is a Spirit [*Spiritus*]? For Spirit has a bodily substance of its own kind, in its own form. Now, even if invisible things, whatsoever they be, have both their substance and their form in God, whereby they are visible to God alone, how much more shall that which has been sent forth from His substance not be without substance!”⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Samuel Noah Kramer, *From the Tablets of Sumer*, Indian Hills, CO: The Falcon's Wing Press, 1956.

⁶⁶ “Dwelling space of the spirit [pneuma] is above” (Theophilus, *Ad Graecos*, c. XIII).

⁶⁷ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum*, translation by Robert M. Grant, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, II.13, I.5.

⁶⁸ *II Apol.*, cc. VIII, IX.

⁶⁹ Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani, *Opera*, Turnholti: Typographi Bepols Editores Pontificii, MCMLIV, Part II. *Adversus Praxean*, VII.8-9.

Discussing the nature of Christ's soul Tertullian makes a generalized statement: "Since, however, it [the soul] exists, it must needs have a something through which it exists. If it has this something, it must be its body [*corpus eius*]. Everything which exists is a bodily substance *sui generis*. Nothing lacks bodily existence but that which is non-existent [*Omne, quod est, corpus est sui generis. Nihil est incorporeale nisi quod non est*]."⁷⁰

To summarize: In the Old Testament there is only one pneuma, that is God's Pneuma (רוח אלהים), the "stuff" of God. Such is the usage of Philo and of Josephus (τὸ πνεῦμα Θεοῦ or πνεῦμα τὸ Θεῖον). Josephus and Philo never speak of the Holy Ghost or Spirit (Pneuma). Justin, however, differentiates between God's Pneuma and the other Pneuma called by him either the Prophetic Pneuma or Holy Pneuma, without explaining its origin. We may, however, deduce its origin from his treatment of the next Pneuma, the Logos, and from the statement of Theophilus. Theophilus clearly identifies the Pneuma mentioned in Genesis 1:2, contrary to the meaning of the text, as a separate Pneuma emanated or radiated from God's Pneuma. Moreover, the second Pneuma in Justin, the Logos, is called God's Son and also Christ and was generated before all creation by some kind of emanation. It was, in the next stage, incarnated in man, Jesus. By a fancy interpretation of Lamentations 4:20 where Jeremiah clearly speaks of the future Jewish and human Messiah as "The breath [pneuma] of our nostrils, the anointed [Messiah] of Yehowah," Justin misunderstood the meaning of the translated Hebrew in the Septuagint as indicating the existence of the divine Pneuma of Christ.

The Holy Spirit or the Prophetic Spirit

In the already quoted passage, Justin states that Christians worship and adore the Triad together with "the host of the other good angels who follow and are made like him [the Son]." Justin here is in agreement with most people of antiquity who filled the world with a plethora of divine beings. All of these divine beings, according to Justin, derive from one source and are produced by the same mechanism, i.e., emanation or effluence of the divine substance, Pneuma, from the one God. The third pneumatic individual of the triad, the Holy Spirit (Pneuma), is represented by Justin in a variety of ways:

1. One of the traditions refers to *prophetic inspiration and utterances*, and therefore Justin most often uses the name Prophetic Spirit (Pneuma) for its description. This tradition was universal and found in all cultures and religions, including Christianity. It was expressed in a variety of prophecies produced by the prophets in a state of ecstasy, of inspiration or oracular utterances.⁷¹ This tradition is attested to by the existence of such words as ἐνθεάζω, ἐνθεόμαι,

⁷⁰ Tertullian, *Opera*, Part II. *De Carne Christi*, XI.3-4.

⁷¹ *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. CXV. *I Apol.*, cc. XXXI-LXII.

ἐνθεος (to be inspired, full of the god, inspired by the god) — all of which refer to the state of being full of god, filled by god (the English equivalent of this is *enthusiasm*). The Holy Spirit assumes a variety of roles and speaks through various characters. Justin often confuses the function of the Logos and the Prophetic Spirit, claiming that all prophecies were inspired by the Logos: “I think that even you will concede that the prophets are inspired by none other than the Divine Word (Logos).”⁷² Thus the Prophetic Spirit mentioned frequently by Justin⁷³ is positively identified by him as the Logos or the Son, and the prophetic function ascribed to the Holy Spirit was performed by the divine Logos. Justin further elaborates on the manner in which the Logos acted in prophecies by saying that the utterances recorded by the prophets were “spoken by the divine Logos who moves them,” and which is equal to the Spirit (Pneuma) of prophecy. He spoke sometimes “as from the person [assuming the role] of God, the Lord and Father of all,” sometimes “as from the person [assuming the role] of Christ” (ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ Χριστοῦ), sometimes “as from the person [assuming the role] of the people [ὡς ἀπὸ προσώπου ἀπὸ λαῶν] answering the Lord or his Father.”⁷⁴ The Spirit (Pneuma) of prophecy also spoke through David.⁷⁵ Therefore, Justin sometimes calls the Holy Spirit the Prophetic Spirit, sometimes the Logos, and sometimes God.⁷⁶ In the *Dialogue with Trypho* Justin speaks of only two divine beings, the Father and the Son, perhaps in an attempt to reconcile the triadic Christian tradition with the prophetic Hebrew tradition of the Old Testament.

2. In the triadic tradition, which must have been popular among unsophisticated Christians of Gentile origin, the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) is represented as the third divine being in the liturgical Christian tradition reported by Justin.⁷⁷ Its generation is understood by a common mechanism for all other divine beings of lesser rank, i.e., by an effluence or emanation of God’s Pneuma. But Justin could not ascribe to it any metaphysical function distinct from that of the Logos.

Thus, in the final analysis we must conclude that in Justin’s time there were already various traditions of the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) and he simply reported them and used the language which seemed to him convenient in a given situation. One hypothesis, promoted by Goodenough,⁷⁸ would have Justin ascribing to the

⁷² *I Apol.*, c. XXXIII.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, c. VI.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, c. XXXVI.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, c. XLI.

⁷⁶ *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. XXV. *I Apol.*, cc. XXXI, XXXVI-XXXVII. *Dialogue with Trypho*, c. LXXXIV.

⁷⁷ *I Apol.*, cc. VI, XIII, LX, LXI, LXV, LXVII.

⁷⁸ Goodenough, 186-188.

Holy Spirit (Pneuma) primarily the Logos function of inspiring the prophets, which was in operation before the incarnation of Christ. After Jesus' baptism and descent of the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) upon him, Christ assumed the former activity of the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) and there would be no more prophets.⁷⁹

Thus, according to Justin, there are three (or two) separate divine entities popularly worshipped by the Christians: God the Father whose substance is God's Pneuma, the second Pneuma who is the Logos or the Son of God, and the third Pneuma who is the holy or prophetic Pneuma. Justin, however, claims that in reality the two Pneumas, the Holy Pneuma and the Logos Pneuma, are one and the same Pneuma and, only according to the functions it performs does it assume different characteristics and identities, and therefore is described by different names. This is typical to Greek mentality and analysis, where every phenomenon, every aspect of nature or of human life was ascribed to a special real or hypostatized agent responsible for its occurrence. We have seen a similar approach in Theophilus and Philo, however without the hypostatization of God's attributes.

By extension, these three Pneumas must be the same as God's Pneuma since they originated from it. So they would be three individuals in the unity of God's substance. But this point was not emphasized by Justin; on the contrary, he insisted on the numerical distinction and subordination of these two Pneumas to the first God, the Father. Thus there is no Trinity in Justin's writings as he believed in only one supreme God. The Logos and the Holy Spirit (Pneuma) had subordinate ranks, being in the second and third place, respectively, and entirely dependent on the will of God the Father.

However, the concept of the unity of the substance, which was later formulated by Tertullian, found its way eventually into the decree of the Council of Nicea (325) which declared that the three divine entities have the same substance, God's or the Father's substance (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς), but they are different individuals. Moreover, Justin's formulation of radiation or emanation as "light from light" (Θεὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός) was used literally in the Nicean assertion.⁸⁰

The First Council of Constantinople (381) extended the Nicean formulation to include the Holy Pneuma as proceeding from the Father and ascribed to it the function of "vivifying" (καὶ εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ κύριον καὶ ζωοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον).⁸¹ The Council of Chalcedon in 451 declared Jesus Christ to be truly God and truly human (Θεὸν ἀληθῶς καὶ ἄνθρωπον

⁷⁹ *Dialogue with Trypho*, cc. LXXXVII-LXXXVIII.

⁸⁰ Joannes Domincus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Graz: Akademische Druck-U. Verlagsanstalt, 1960. *Concilium Nicaeanum Generale, Symbolum Concilii*, Vol. 2, 666-667.

⁸¹ *Concilium Constantinopolitanum Generale, Symbolum Concilii*, in Mansi, Vol. 3, 566.

ἄληθώς) and of one substance (ὁμοούσιον) with the Father in relation to his Godhead and of one substance with us according to human kind, begotten before all time of the Father, and in the last days from Mary the God-bearer; and though he has two separate natures (ἐν δύο φύσεσιν ἀσυγχήτως), they are preserved in one function or role (person) and in one individual (εἰς ἐν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν).⁸² Finally the Council of Toledo in 589 introduced a modification to the Latin text of the creed, the famous “filioque” as the provenance of the Holy Spirit.

Numenius and the Greek Sources of Justin’s Triadic Formula

When Justin mentions that Christians believe in the triad — the most true God who is the Father, the second (God), and the third (God) — he refers directly to the discussion among his contemporary Middle Platonists. We have testimony of this discussion preserved in the fragments of the philosophical writings of Numenius of Apamea in Syria (ca 150), which were preserved primarily by Eusebius of Caesarea, Origen, Macrobius, Calcidius, and Porphyry.⁸³ We know nothing about Numenius’ life. Johannes Laurentius Lydus (ca 410-465), a Byzantine philosopher, mentions his name with the sobriquet Roman (Νουμήνιος ὁ Ῥωμαῖος) which would indicate that Numenius lived in Rome.⁸⁴ His name is mentioned by Clement of Alexandria (ca 150-215)⁸⁵ which provides the *terminus ad quem* as the second half of the second century. Preserved fragments are from: *On the Good* (Περὶ τοῦγαθοῦ), a work modeled on the dialogues of Plato; a treatise, *On the Infidelity of the Academy to Plato*; *On the Secrets of Plato*; and *On the Incorruptibility of the Soul*.

Triadic speculations are nothing new. We find them in Greek philosophy, as well as in Egyptian religion.⁸⁶ Particularly striking is the agreement of Numenius’ doctrine with that presented in the so-called *Chaldean Oracles*.⁸⁷ The probable reason is that both Numenius’ writings and the *Chaldean Oracles* have the same source, namely Platonic tradition via Xenocrates. This was the theological doctrine of the second century. Numenius, in turn, influenced the

⁸² *Concilium Chalcedonense, Confessio Fidei*, in Mansi, Vol. 6, 1125.

⁸³ Numénus *Fragments*, texte établi et traduit par Édouard des Places, Paris: Société d’Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1973. *The Neoplatonic Writings of Numenius*, translated by Kenneth Guthrie, Lawrence, KS: Selene Books, 1987.

⁸⁴ Lydus, *De Mensib.*, IV.80 in Numenius, *Frag.* 57 (Des Places).

⁸⁵ Clément d’Alexandrie, *Les Stromates*, Paris: Édition du Cerf, 1951, T. I.22.150.4.

⁸⁶ John Gwyn Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996.

⁸⁷ Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978. Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*, translated from the Greek by Thomas Taylor, London: Reeves and Turner, 1895.

Christian apologist, Justin, the Greek philosophers Plotinus and Porphyry, and later Eusebius of Caesarea.

Xenocrates of Chalcedon

Xenocrates of Chalcedon⁸⁸ (d. 314 BCE) was the second successor of Plato in his Academy after Speusippus. We have only fragments of their writings and testimonies left by others about their doctrines. They both elaborated further on the existence of cosmic principles in Plato's *Philebus*,⁸⁹ already listed by Pythagoras. Eventually such speculations led to the abandonment of the theory of ideas as separate entities and to postulating that ideas are the thoughts of the divine intellect. As Pythagoras ascribed a great role to numbers and Plato described the cosmos as an expression of geometrical and mathematical regularities,⁹⁰ it seems that Speusippus and Xenocrates substituted ideas for numbers, fusing ideal and mathematical entities.

Xenocrates' philosophy constitutes an important transition to Middle Platonism. He derived everything that exists from the supreme monad (ἐκ τοῦ ἑνός) identified with the intellect, and from the non-one (ἀενάον) which he identified with matter or the indefinite dyad (ἡ ἀοριστος δυάς) due to its multiplicity.⁹¹ He tried to preserve the Platonic concept of ideas as the models of things, so he treated them as numbers because just as numbers defined things, so ideas defined matter. Ideas were invisible, comprehensible by the intellect, and incorporeal principles of sensible reality imparted from the supreme monad. As to the material of the sensible world, it was made of four simple and primary elements. These were organized into composite entities analogically to the construction of geometrical figures which were produced from primary figures. Moreover all reality was divided into three geometrical patterns according to the three types of triangles: the equilateral triangle represented unity, thus the soul of the supreme Divinity; the isosceles represented equality and disequality, unity and variety, thus the soul of demonic beings having human passions and divine faculties; the scalene with all unequal sides represented the descending souls mixed with the material elements, thus human beings. Next, following his master, Xenocrates claimed that the universe was born out of disorder and brought into order by the Divinity. But he defended Plato, claiming that when Plato said that the world was generated, he did not mean to say that the universe was generated in time, but only intended to explain that the cosmos derived from

⁸⁸ Senocrate, Ermodoro, *Frammenti*, Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1982.

⁸⁹ Plato, *Philebus*, cc. 23c - 27e.

⁹⁰ It is quite interesting to compare the mathematical/geometrical metaphysical concepts of nature with modern string theories. Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, *Frag.* 101.

preexistent matter and from a form analogical to the process of mathematical reasoning. And the cosmos had an indestructible nature which meant that it persisted in existence by the will of the Divinity which governed it: “The universe is eternal and ungenerated.”⁹²

We can reconstruct similarly Xenocrates’ psychology from the preserved fragments and testimonies.⁹³ According to a view found in all ancient philosophers, the soul has two characteristics: it is able to move by itself (therefore, able to move the passive body) and it has consciousness. These two characteristics are essential properties of living matter. Thus the soul is the cause of life. Xenocrates is said to have claimed that the soul was the “number that moves by itself” and since it defines the body, it is the component that gives the living being an impulse to move in a manner which is proper to it. Xenocrates, by using the analogy of number, wanted to indicate an intermediary character of the soul between ideas and things made on the model of ideas. Thus the concept of number refers to the idea; the concept of movement refers to the things made on the model of ideas. In the soul two realities are mixed together: the indivisible and the divisible, the intelligible (οὐσία νοετὰ) and the sensible. As such the soul is life *par excellence*.

The nature of the soul was defined by Xenocrates as a mixture of astral substance (which was either fire or ether) and the element earth. Because of this double character some tried to fuse together Democritus’ doctrine of the soul as corporeal with that of Xenocrates. But this double nature was similar to the nature of the demons, though they were closer to the Divinity. Thus sometimes the soul was called a “demon” as well, and those humans who had a “good demon” were called happy (εὐδαίμονες) because they had a soul perfect in virtues.⁹⁴

In his theology, Xenocrates differentiated two cosmic principles as divinities — the monad (ὁ μονάς) and the dyad (ἡ δυάς).⁹⁵ One was the masculine divinity, and, as such, had the role of father and ruled in heaven. Xenocrates proclaimed it to be the one (singular) and the intellect. This was the supreme deity, the first God, immovable and unchanging, called Zeus. The other was the feminine divinity, who had the role of mother of gods and ruled over the gods beneath heaven — she was the soul of the universe. Clement of Alexandria ascribed to Xenocrates the distinction between Zeus the supreme God, the Father, and the other inferior God, the Son. Some claimed that Xenocrates differentiated eight gods (or groups of gods): the astral gods with the Olympians; the five planets; the whole of heaven as such (whose substance was ether); and the demons or Titans,

⁹² *Ibid.*, *Frag.* 92-122; 155-158.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, *Frag.* 165-212.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, *Frag.* 238.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, *Frag.* 213-230.

the invisible demigods inhabiting the regions below the moon. There were also special divine powers residing in the corporeal elements (e.g., Poseidon, god of the humid element, Demeter, goddess of productive earth, etc.). The demons were gods located between celestial divinity and humans, and there were good and bad demons. They were susceptible to human passions and changeable because they had the corporeal admixture (of the element earth?) with their divine element.⁹⁶ Demons incited humans to all bad ceremonies and religious rites, to human sacrifices and to wars; they inflicted humans with disasters and plagues. Others, like Tertullian, claimed that Xenocrates differentiated only two groups of gods: the astral Olympians and the Titans derived from earth. Thus the astral bodies would be the instruments of the monad, and the sublunar Titans and demons linked to the invisible corporeal elements would represent the manifestations of the dyad.

Numenius: The Immediate Source of Justin's Theology

Numenius is most interesting among the Middle Platonists because he developed further such concepts of Greek philosophical tradition (one, Demiurge, Father, Logos, Mother, world soul) into a theological system by introducing explicitly a system of hierarchical cosmic entities, two or three Gods, interrelated by *πρόσχησις*, which is a difficult term to translate, but signifies a desired, loving dependence and provenance. Such a conception could have an appeal to the philosophically oriented early Christians who operated within the framework of biblical formulations. Moreover, Numenius was acquainted with Hebrew and Christian scriptural tradition,⁹⁷ a fact which could have gained for him sympathy from the Christian side. Eusebius praised Numenius for deriving his ideas from Plato and Moses. Numenius himself declared Plato to be just "Moses who speaks the Attic language."⁹⁸ There is a complete correlation between the systems of Justin and Numenius (Table 1).

The starting point for Justin, as well as later for Tertullian, is the baptismal formula, which had a sacramental (or magical), eschatological, social, and moral significance defined by its Hebrew and ritualistic original character. Justin and Tertullian operated in the Hellenic environment where the Hebrew context was long forgotten. They added to the Hebrew background a cosmic dimension and transferred it from the religious to the philosophical, incorporating cosmic ontological terms. Justin was influenced by the triadic Middle Platonic solution of Numenius and adapted his cosmic ontological concepts to the Christian historical records. Tertullian would later add the Egyptian trinitarian pattern.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, *Frag.* 161, 225.

⁹⁷ M.J. Edwards, 33.

⁹⁸ Numenius, *Frag.* 8 (Des Places).

⁹⁹ John Gwyn Griffiths, *Triads and Trinity*.

The innovation which was introduced by Numenius to the Pythagorean-Platonic religious doctrines was the introduction of a second transcendental and noetic entity between the supreme being and the universe. Numenius, undoubtedly influenced by Plato's statement about the three principles in the universe transmitted by Xenocrates, which we have already discussed, derived the concept of the three Gods from distinguishing "all things in their rank and order." First, after thorough analysis of the Platonic concepts of being and becoming, he establishes that that which exists is incorporeal (*ἄσώματον*) and intelligible (*νοητόν*), and has the name of substance and being (*τοῦ ἄσώματου εἶαι ὄνομα οὐσίαν καὶ ὄν*).¹⁰⁰

Having established that existing substance and idea are intelligible and that the mind is their cause, Numenius concludes that the mind alone is good.¹⁰¹ Now from the life-process of the supreme Divinity (Mind) he derives his statement about the three Gods (or Minds):

The first God, who exists in himself, is simple; for as he absolutely deals with none but himself, he is in no way divisible; however, the second God and the third God are one. When however this (unity) is brought together with matter, which is doubleness, the (one Divinity) indeed unites it, but is by matter split, inasmuch as matter is full of desires, and in a flowing condition. But inasmuch as he is not only in relation with the intelligible, which would be more suitable to his own nature, he forgets himself, while he gazes on matter, and cares for it. He comes into touch with the perceptible, and busies himself with it; he leads it up into his own nature, because he was moved by desire for matter.¹⁰²

Thus the first God is characterized as the first Mind, the Good-in-itself (*ἀύτοαγαθόν*), self-existence (*αὐτὸ ὄν*). He exists in himself, is simple and not divisible.¹⁰³ He does not create and remains idle (*ἀργόν*) from all the labors of creation, as would a king.¹⁰⁴

The second God, the Creator (*ποιτῆς δημιουργός*), rules by passing through the heavens. What is his function? He shares his mind with beings on earth. Whenever the Divinity looks on any of us, life and animation of bodies is the result, and whenever the Divinity turns himself toward himself, all animation is extinguished.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Numenius, *Frgs.* 20, 21, 22 (Guthrie); *Frgs.* 6, 7, 8 (des Places).

¹⁰¹ Numenius, *Frag.* 25 (Guthrie); *Frag.* 16 (Des Places).

¹⁰² Numenius, *Frag.* 27 (Guthrie); *Frag.* 11 (Des Places).

¹⁰³ Numenius, *Frgs.* 26, 31 (Guthrie), *Frag.* 11 (Des Places); *Frag.* 25 (Guthrie), *Frag.* 16 (Des Places); *Frag.* 31 (Guthrie), *Frag.* 17 (Des Places).

¹⁰⁴ Numenius, *Frag.* 12 (Des Places); *Frag.* 27a (Guthrie).

¹⁰⁵ Numenius, *Frag.* 27a (Guthrie); *Frag.* 12 (Des Places).

The second Divinity remains in a subordinate position to the first one. As the creative Divinity he is the principle of becoming (*γενέσεως*), so the Good must be the principle of existing substance (*ουσίας*). And as the creative Divinity is to the first, so must be becoming to being (substance), because he is his image (*εἰκῶν*) and imitation (*μίμημα*).¹⁰⁶ The second Divinity in this theory is the Demiurge who has a double character — either he participates in the first God, in which case he is called the second God, or he turns himself to matter and produces the world out of formless matter (since his nature is being Creator), in which case he is called the third God and may even be regarded as the world. His essence (or substance) can be analyzed from two perspectives as well. First, the second God is the principle of becoming and inasmuch as he produces from himself his own idea and the universe he is the Demiurge and intelligible. Second, if the substance (or essence) of the first supreme God who is intelligible is intellect and he himself is the Good, then the second God, the Demiurge, inasmuch as he is the Good of Becoming, must be the Good-in-itself co-natural or cognate (*σύμφυτον*) to the substance of the first God. Thus both share the same substance, though Numenius does not state this explicitly.

Thus Numenius classifies the Demiurge, the second God, as analogous to the first God, his image and imitation. Numenius concludes that there are four entities (*πραγμάτια*) with the following names: 1. The first God who is the Good-in-itself, pure intellect; 2. The good Demiurge, God Creator, his imitator; 3. The one substance (essence) which is shared by the two — the first God and the second God; 4. The copy of this substance (essence), the beautiful (i.e., ordered) world which is beautified (i.e., ordered from disorder) by its participation in the beauty.¹⁰⁷

The second God and the third God are one whenever he is united with matter (dyad). Because the second God not only remains in relation with the intelligible (appropriate for his nature), but also with the perceptible, so, whenever he gazes on matter, he forgets himself and comes into touch with the perceptible, moved by desire for matter.¹⁰⁸

In this philosophy, since the first transcendental God was unknown to man, did not create, was impassible, and contented himself with contemplation, the second God was needed as an agent of creation and animation. Moreover, if it was not necessary for the first God to create, then he could be considered the father of the second God, the Demiurge. And it was for reasons of piety that Numenius denied a direct creative function to the first God. The Demiurge rules in heaven, and busies himself with both the intelligible and the sensible; through

¹⁰⁶ Numenius, *Frag.* 25 (Guthrie); *Frag.* 16 (Des Places).

¹⁰⁷ Numenius, *Frag.* 16 (Des Places); *Frag.* 25 (Guthrie).

¹⁰⁸ Numenius, *Frag.* 26 (Guthrie); *Frag.* 11 (Des Places).

him happens all that happens.¹⁰⁹ Just as a ship captain sails at sea and looks to the sky to find his way, so does the Creator, who is linked to matter by many connections, regulate its harmony through ideas. By looking up to God on high he receives his critical judgment, but his impulsive motion he receives from the desire for matter.¹¹⁰

And we humans exist in our terrestrial life when the intellect (animation) is sent down to us. When God looks at us and turns to each one, our bodies become alive by uniting us with his radiation (divine *nous*). When God turns away, all that animation is extinguished while the intellect continues its blissful life.¹¹¹

The relation between the first God and the second God Numenius illustrates by using several analogies: farmer and planter, donor and receiver, a fire kindled from another fire, knowledge imparted to the receiver by the donor.¹¹² This participation of the second God in the first becomes still more pronounced as he receives his goodness from the first by a process of thought, so that the Good is one. He really becomes one with the first God. This relation to the first God remains in complete accord with the Platonic paradigm of ideas: just as humans and everything else are modeled on ideas, so the Good, or the idea of Good, denotes the Demiurge.¹¹³ In another fragment Numenius is reported to teach a triad of three Gods: the first whom he calls Father (πατέρα), the second whom he calls Creator (ποιητής), and the third — Creation (ποίημα). Thus the Creator would be two Gods —the first and the second. And using poetic language, the three Gods could be described using terms of filial descent as the fore-father (πάππον), offspring or son (ἔγγονον), and descendant or grandson (ἀπόγονον).¹¹⁴

Thus, in the final analysis, the first God is the cause of everything and has absolute control. For though he is impassible, he has an innate motion from which derives the order (i.e., beauty) in the world, and the salvation of all.¹¹⁵ And he uses the second God to organize matter, thus creating the world:

Numenius relates the first (Mind) to that which is really alive (κατὰ τὸ ὄ ἐστι ζῶον); and he says that it thinks out of desire (ἐν προσχρήσει) for the second (God). The second Mind he relates to the intellect that becomes creative out of desire for the third; and the third he relates to discursive thinking (κατὰ τὸν διανοούμενον), i.e., human [thinking].¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Numenius, *Frag.* 12 (Des Places); *Frag.* 27a,b (Guthrie).

¹¹⁰ Numenius, *Frag.* 13,18 (Des Places); *Frag.* 28,32 (Guthrie).

¹¹¹ Numenius, *Frag.* 12 (Des Places); *Frag.* 27a,b (Guthrie).

¹¹² Numenius, *Frag.* 13, 14 (Des Places); *Frag.* 28, 29 (Guthrie).

¹¹³ Numenius, *Frag.* 19, 20 (Des Places); *Frag.* 33, 34 (Guthrie).

¹¹⁴ Numenius, *Frag.* 21 (Des Places); *Frag.* 36 (Guthrie).

¹¹⁵ Numenius, *Frag.* 13, 14, 15 (Des Places); *Frag.* 28, 29, 30 (Guthrie).

¹¹⁶ Numenius, *Frag.* 39 (Guthrie); *Frag.* 22 (Des Places).

Conclusions

Justin developed his theology by interpreting Christian documents using the concepts found in Greek Middle Platonic philosophy, particularly that of Philo and of Numenius. These concepts represented the religious and philosophical ideology of his world and time.

According to Justin, there are three (or two) separate divine entities popularly worshipped by the Christians: God the Father whose substance is God's Pneuma, the second Pneuma who is the Logos or the Son of God, and the third Pneuma who is the Holy or Prophetic Pneuma. Justin, however, claims that in reality the two Pneumas, the Holy Pneuma and the Logos Pneuma, are one and the same Pneuma and, only according to the functions it performs, does it assume different characteristics and identities, and therefore is called by different names.

The names of the three divine entities are derived from biblical terms found in the Old and New Testament and the baptismal formula. These terms were hypostatized and interpreted in the light of Greek philosophical and theological speculations.

By extension, the three Pneumas differentiated by Justin must be the same as God's Pneuma since they originated from it. So they would be three individuals in the unity of God's substance. But this point was not emphasized by Justin. On the contrary, he insisted on the subordination of these two Pneumas to the first God, the Father. Thus there is no developed Trinity in Justin's writings but an unequal triad because he believed in only one God. The Logos and the Holy Spirit (Pneuma), though called Gods, had subordinate ranks, being in the second and third place, respectively, and entirely dependent on the will of God the Father.

Table 1
Comparison of the Two Systems

Justin Martyr	Numenius
<p>God is the Father the first God; He is Father of all; His substance is Pnuma; He is ungenerated (unbegotten); He is unchangeable; He is impassible; He is ineffable (unutterable); He is nameless; He is eternal (always existing); He is Demiurge, creator or begetter of all things but not directly, through the second God, his Son or Logos; he sows the Logos; He is Master of all; He is the cause of the second God's power and existence; He is the principle of life.</p>	<p>The first God The first Mind; He is the Father of the second God; He is simple, indivisible; He is Good-in-itself, source of being and an idea; He is principle of being (οὐσία); He is idle, does not create directly; He is impassible (stable); He is occupied with intelligibles; in the final analysis He is the cause of everything; from Him comes order in the world, its eternity and salvation; He thinks out of desire (πρόσχησις) for the second God; the first God is related to the second as the farmer to the planter, for He sows the seeds of all souls; He is related to that which is alive, He is the principle of life;</p>

Justin Martyr	Numenius
<p>The Second in Rank the Logos (Word), the Son, Jesus Christ (second) Pneuma (Spirit); first power of God; identified with the Logos; the Logos is with (?) God and is His first-generated (begotten) of God as the Son of God; came from the Father before the beginning of the world; Logos generated the universe out of a shapeless substratum; He (It) generated himself as a man, Jesus (as in the Greek manner of Zeus's sons) by taking the shape of man through the power and will of the Father; He (It) depends on the Father; He (It) is identified often with the third entity in rank, the prophetic; He (It) is a teacher; every human partakes of the Logos, i.e., has a part of Him (It); He (It) is the seed of God; Son and Logos as a generated being has names: Christ — name associated with being anointed by God for ordering all things Jesus — name associated with being Savior and: (for the destruction of demons); lawgiver of the new covenant; also angel and apostle; Justin identified Logos with the World Soul of Plato; He (It) does not accomplish anything without the power and will of God the Father.</p>	<p>The Second God or Mind He (It) is direct agent of creation, Demiurge; He (It) is agent of animation; He (It) is occupied with the intelligibles and sensibles; He (It) becomes creative out of a desire for the third God; when He (It) is turned toward us our bodies are animated by his radiations with which they are united; He (It) transplants and distributes what was planted from above, i.e. by the first God; Second God is good by participating in the good of the first; as the Demiurge is to the Good so is becoming to being (substance), i.e., as image to an imitation; thus the second God is an image and imitation of the first God; He (It) has a double character: when He participates in the first God then He is the second God, when He participates in the world (matter) which He creates then He is the third God; He (It) produces from himself His own idea and the world; He (It) generates the world out of desire for the third; He implants, distributes, and transplants into men the seed planted by the first God — the noetic part of the soul.</p>

<p>Justin Martyr</p> <p>The Third in Rank The Prophetic (Pneuma) Spirit; also called the Holy Spirit (Pneuma); divine Spirit; often identified with the second in rank, with the Logos and God; He (It) moves prophets; He (It) speaks as a human person; He (It) speaks as person of God; He (It) speaks as person of Christ; He (It) is principle of becoming; the second God, the lawgiver</p> <p>Relationship Between the Three The Son, Logos born by emanation from the Father without abscission, analogy to fire kindled from fire, rays of sun to the sun, voice uttered from the source. The same mechanism must be supposed for the Prophetic Spirit since in reality it is the same being.</p>	<p>Numenius</p> <p>The Third God or Mind The third God — Creation; as world He (It) it is produced by the second God; as intellect He (It) is related to human discursive thinking; speaks as person of people; if He (It) separates from the second, its generation must be by analogy the same as that of the second in rank;</p> <p>Relationship Between the Three Relationship between the first and the second as fire kindled from fire, farmer and planter, donor and receiver, knowledge imparted to the receiver by the donor. Relationship as between Father-Creator and Creation. Other metaphor: Father-Son (offspring)-descendant (grandson). There are four things (πραγμάτα) 1. The first God, Good in itself; 2. His imitation, good Demiurge; 3. Being (substance) (οὐσία) which is shared between the first God and the second God; 4. Beautiful cosmos is imitation of being (substance) beautified by participating in the beauty of the first God. Everything is in everything; The Good is one because the second God partakes of the first.</p>
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